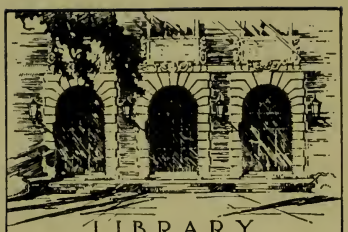
TREGARTHEN

By

G. Norway



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TREGARTHEN

VOL. III.

TREGARTHEN

BY

G. NORWAY

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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TREGARTHEN.

CHAPTER I.

GREAT LADIES IN COUNCIL.

Early as it was in the year, Parliament was sitting, and many of Lady Sarah's friends and relations were in town.

Sir Theophilus never liked his wife's family. Plain and simple in his own ways and manners, the old gentleman was most intensely proud at heart. Proud of his long unblemished descent, his untarnished name, his beautiful place, he considered the Vanes in the light of mushroom

nobility, and mushroom nobility bound to decay shortly, and return to the slime from which it sprang.

Gaming was a passion among them, and a passion which was bringing the family fast to ruin. In the hope of saving themselves from annihilation, they truckled for place, they were untrue to each political party in its turn, they would do anything for money. So said, and so thought Sir Theophilus, perhaps with reasons of his own to justify such opinions.

Why, therefore, had he married one of this family? Gossip whispered that he had not married Lady Sarah so much as that she had married him. No one ever knew the rights of that story, nor ever would now. Sir Theophilus was a model husband, and her ladyship certainly had been a great beauty in her day. But, if she had carried her point over her marriage, she had not managed to secure her own

way in much else. Sir Theophilus kept away from London as much as possible; eschewed politics; and would have little or nothing to do with the Vanes.

Charles disliked his mother's relations as much as his father did. To him they appeared as the essence of worldliness;—cold, hard, innate worldliness;—and he gave them a wide berth whenever he could do so without vexing his mother.

Had he known that she was entertaining a conclave of them at five o'clock tea, he would not have gone directly to her room upon returning to the hotel; but it was only upon throwing open the door that he perceived the high nose and thin lips of the countess, his uncle's wife; and once more wondered how it was that all her velvets and furs failed in making her tall figure look anything but scraggy.

Lady Matilda Vane, his mother's sister, was there too; elegant, pale, faded; a dis-

appointed woman, and one soured by disappointment. Mrs. Bellasys was there; she lived with Lady Matilda, and was some kind of distant relation; she was more repulsive to the young man than either of the others. Their way of patronizing his mother, sneering at his father, and toadying himself were all bad enough; but the others *were* relations, older relations, people of higher rank and title. What he managed to endure from them, he resented hotly in Mrs. Bellasys. Who was she that she should scorn such people as his father and he himself, and talk condescendingly to him? Charles always felt wicked when she chimed in to the conversation.

Lady Sarah was a far better woman than any of them. She loved their patronage as little as did her husband or her son; yet she yielded to it when with them, adopted their tone, echoed their senti-

ments, and seemed to be as cold-hearted and worldly as they. Early habit perhaps accounted for this in part. Her sisters were much older than she; and, in early youth, she had been left a child orphan under their care; but she was a very different woman at heart, and showed her better side when away from their influence for any length of time. When with them, that influence was fatal to her better nature.

Charles could not talk of Mabel in the hearing of these ladies. What had they in common with her? He knew, instinctively, that they could never understand her gentle sweetness, her love for her family, her refinement of taste, her cultivation of mind. All this would be a sealed book to them; she possessed no money, no name of note, no connections of consequence. His love for her would be regarded as an infatuation, a misfortune,

a folly. How could he speak of her before them?

But he was regularly caught on this occasion; nor was there anything for him but to swallow his annoyance, smooth his face, and greet them politely. He did his best.

Cart-ropes would not have dragged him into the room, had he known that they were there, but he made the best of it now that he could not help himself otherwise.

'My poor dear boy!' began the countess at once, 'your mother has been telling us all about this dreadful thing! Who would have thought it! What she and your father will do, I cannot think!' And she put her handkerchief to her eyes.

'Well, aunt, there is nothing that we *can* do but await the result, and keep up our hearts as well as possible. The trial cannot come on for some months. All

sorts of evidence must be searched for, and inquiries made. Meantime, I must work hard at college, and try to get something afterwards sufficiently creditable not to disgrace you all. Has the earl any good fat livings to give away to impecunious young men, if I take Orders? Or perhaps he could secure for me a police appointment in India?'

'I am sure, my dear Charles, that the earl and I will do everything in our power most gladly; but what *can* we do? With Coventry so expensive a man, and Algernon's debts always coming to be paid off, and the girls unmarried, I can assure you that we are awfully poor ourselves. I may tell you, in confidence, strict confidence, that I often dare not send Madame Élise's bills to the earl! But you must marry, my dear. We must look out for an American dollar princess for you. They expect a title, certainly, in general,

but we must hope. With your connections——'

'Thanks, aunt. I am humble, let us hope that you may find a condescending lady whose father "struck ile," or something. I think I would prefer being jailer to the native Indian, though.'

'Oh, my dearest Sophia, if you only could!' cried Lady Sarah.

'I daresay we shall do very well,' said the countess, kindly. 'One may say that the whole of the season lies before us. As to going back to Oxford, it is simple nonsense, Charles. You must come to us, go out, and show yourself. Fortunately you are good-looking, which goes a great way. Keep your head cool, and make the most of your chances, and you will do well, I have no doubt. You must not expect an *English* lady, they know all about contingencies and so on too well. No, you must not depend upon an *English* woman

unless you go *very* low, and then those fortunes made in trade are always apt to be so deceptive. But an American is a better and safer speculation. The girl's family is so much further away, you would not be so much hampered by them, and fewer odd stories will float about concerning them. Nobody ever hears of an American lady's connections, it is one great point in their favour. But you must not be too particular as to age or beauty.'

'I shall be grateful for small mercies, aunt,' said the young man, dutifully. 'Is my father alone, mother?'

'No, Sir Thomas Courtney is with him, and Barlow, I fancy.'

'I will just go and see how he is, if these ladies will excuse me,' said Charles, rising.

'He really is very good-looking,' resumed the countess, as he left them. 'He ought to do well.'

'Dear Sophia, if you can only persuade him to it, it would be the greatest of comforts. But I fear. I know him so well. He was chaffing you now, while he was speaking so properly that anyone might fancy him the most docile creature.'

'Chaffing! Me! My dear Sarah, it is really time for you to be more among cultivated persons. You have really got into strange ways of talking from living so long in those wild places.'

'There is no one else in the way, I hope?' asked Lady Matilda, to avert the dispute which she saw impending; for the countess loved to set people down, and her sisters-in-law did not love to be snubbed.

'He is too young for that.'

'Ah! I wish he were,' sighed his mother. 'But he did fancy himself in love last summer with a girl very much beneath him, an artist's daughter,

and he was quite headstrong about it. But his father and I put a stop to it.'

'His uncle's story over again!' cried the countess, in dismay.

'No, not exactly that. This girl is educated, and a lady in her way.'

'All the more dangerous,' said the countess.

'Is her father anyone that is ever heard of?' asked Lady Matilda.

'He is Frank Selby, who had that picture of the "Invalid" last year in the Academy. I believe it was much talked of, according to Augusta Courtney.'

'Frank Selby!' cried Mrs. Bellasys. 'Oh, people say that he will be the next R.A. I met him once at Lady Morton's garden-party, a dangerously charming man, with a pretty little nonentity for a wife, shabbily dressed. Not an atom of taste about her.'

'Yes, and there are ten children,' sighed Lady Sarah.

'Ten children! Girls? Good-looking?' asked Mrs. Bellasys, with uplifted hands and eyes.

'Unfortunately, yes. Six are girls, some of them very pretty. This one is so.'

'Dear, dear, what a misfortune!' cried the countess, whose own daughters were more high-bred than beautiful. Like their mother, they were, to put it mildly, slender, their noses and cheek-bones high.

A faint gleam of compunction crossed Lady Sarah's mind, recalling the memory of Mrs. Selby's sweet, delicate face, her trouble and anxieties about Steenie, and how her own heart had gone out to her at Polzeath.

'Some of them are very little girls—one a baby,' said she, as if in exculpation.

'Worse than ever,' said Mrs. Bellasys. 'That sort of woman often has so many

children. There may be half-a-dozen more yet.'

'This is a nice girl, a very nice girl, in her own place,' resumed Lady Sarah. 'They are all interesting young people. Augusta has one sister for a companion. She inherits her father's talent, and paints flowers well. She was just what Diana Courtney wanted for Augusta, and they have taken her to Italy with them.'

'Is she pretty also?' asked Mrs. Bellasys with a laugh, beneath which Lady Sarah winced. 'Lady Courtney has an heir too, I think.'

'Now, Maria, none of your fun,' said Lady Matilda. 'Sarah does not know what to make of you and your nonsense.'

'Lady Courtney knows best what suits her daughter,' replied Lady Sarah, a Vane all over at that moment. 'The second Miss Selby is not particularly pretty, though talented.'

'Now, don't fire up, my dear,' remonstrated the countess. 'Maria Bellasys only meant to make a harmless joke. Don't be thin-skinned, but we can make allowances for you now.'

'Yes, indeed, Lady Sarah, I am sorry if my harmless pleasantry went home,' apologized Mrs. Bellasys, but she laughed again as she said this, and again Lady Sarah winced.

'Mr. Courtney has never seen her. He is but recently returned from the other side of the world,' said she, coldly. 'He is, unhappily, in very delicate health, not likely to think of marriage. The younger boys are still at school.'

'Does that delicate health come as a Grenfell inheritance?' asked Mrs. Bellasys. 'Sir Theophilus lost several brothers, I believe, in early life, did he not?'

'From no inherent delicacy of constitution, however,' replied Lady Sarah, with

outward calm and inward rage. 'Are you going to the duchess's breakfast-party next week?' turning to her sister-in-law. 'What is she thinking of to give that kind of entertainment so early in the year?'

'Oh, it will be charming,' cried the countess. 'You must go, I will get you a card. The duchess and Lady Langham are rivals in orchid-growing, and this is a breakfast in the conservatories, on purpose to crush poor, dear Lady Langham for once and for all. She will never hold up her head again after it. I cannot tell you what expense the duchess has not gone to in adding to her glass, but, lord, my dear, half the orchids will be hired! She has not half enough to fill all that space if they are all her own. But my Lady Langham is full of pluck. She will never show that she thinks herself defeated. It will be great fun to see her. I will get you a card, and one for Charles, too.'

'Not for me, thank you. I do not feel equal to going out at present.'

'Now, don't be foolish, my love. You ought to go everywhere, and show yourself. People will talk so if you shut yourself up. The world is so ill-natured, you know.'

Mabel's pleasant smile flashed before Lady Sarah's mental vision, but she steeled herself against the thought that there was certainly no ill-nature there.

'I don't care for orchids,' said she. 'Sir Theophilus is not very well. I shall not go.'

'As you like,' said her sister-in-law. 'But I shall send a card for Charles.'

The trio took its leave, and Lady Sarah was left to digest the pabulum of pride as best she could.

Her feelings were stirred in Mabel's direction more than before. Had her son come to her at that moment with his story,

warm from his heart, she would have been more inclined to have listened to him than she would have believed possible.

She sat, shading her eyes from the fire-light, and thinking, thinking, thinking. How lonely she was! Her sisters were no comfort to her; they never had been so. They were so heartless. Oh, if she only had daughters of her own! Diana Courtney was a happier woman than she, though she was a goose, and none of her girls were clever. Augusta thought herself clever, but she was not so really. But Augusta was so lovable. Her follies and affectations were all so womanly, so graceful; she never jarred upon her; there was such a softness of manner. It was very pleasant to have nice girls about one; how she wished that she had such daughters.

She might have one. A girl who was as pretty as Augusta, and far more clever. As gentle, yet an intellectual companion.

Less flighty, but full of a yet more varied store of resources. A girl who would be contented with home and home pleasures; whose sweet ministrations would bring comfort with her to Sir Theophilus as well as to herself.

Both had missed her more than they had thought possible when she left.

But where were day-dreams leading her? No, no, that would never do. Charles must never throw himself away like that. No question of a few years' ease and slothful pleasure for herself must ever permit her to consent. At his age, and in his circumstances, her son must not be allowed to throw himself away. The countess was right. Charles must do the best he could for himself. Perhaps he might be able to find youth, beauty, and good connection as well as money; but riches were a *sine quâ non.*

She closed her eyes upon the fair vision

of Mabel's gracious presence; she deafened her ears to her cheerful voice; she steeled her heart to her gentleness; and banished her image resolutely from it.

Charles, meantime, had sought his father.

'Engaged to Miss Selby! Now! My boy, it is perfectly hopeless,' said the old gentleman.

'She will wait, father. We neither of us think of marrying for years. But, father, this is a bright hope for the future worth working for. I shall have energy and strength to work for *this*, and comfort the while. Give me your consent, father. Say "God bless you!" to me. You do like her in your heart, I know.'

'Yes, Charlie, yes. All well enough in a way, but it won't do. Indeed it won't. Your mother will never yield.'

'My mother loves me, sir.'

'Your mother will never bear driving, Charlie. You must temporize with her,

and be patient. I fear she will never consent.'

'Do you consent, sir?'

'What use would it be for me to consent, if she will not?'

'All the use in the world, sir. At least I should have the sympathy of one parent.'

'My sympathy you will always have, my dear boy. But it is a hopeless affair. What are you to marry upon?'

'We do not think of marrying for a long time, sir; but, father, I do love her so dearly.'

'My poor fellow!'

'Not poor, with her love, father. Not poor if she loves me, and you give me your blessing upon my hopes.'

'Well, well, I could not refuse you my blessing, Charlie; but, my dear boy, it is a useless form of words. Your mother will never allow it. Even if we were to persuade her to it, even if you and I *could*

prevail, *she would not be allowed* to consent.'

'Father!' cried Charles. 'You surprise me! Listen, sir. If *you* give me your consent,—your bare consent, you understand,—with or without your blessing upon us,—there is not a Vane living that I should allow to interfere with me. I snap my fingers at them all,—from the earl downwards. But, oh, father! let it be your blessing.'

'Charlie, Charlie, you are younger and stronger than I. God in heaven bless you, my boy,—bless you with His choicest gifts.'

Charles wrung his father's hand, and left him upon this, in haste, lest he might retract or modify his words. His father looked after him.

'He is a different sort of fellow from my brother Charles,' thought he. 'There is little chance of his story over again in this case. This boy is stronger in every way. Where does the difference come from?

But I don't think, if Sarah is wise, that she will cross him too far.'

Lady Sarah was utterly unpersuadable, however. Sir Theophilus needed not to have sought far to find out where his son had derived his obstinacy of character. Only what was dogged obstinacy in the one was well-calculated strength in the other. Charles did not argue, nor did he yield.

'Father,' said he, after one or two interviews, 'will you call upon Mabel with me? I shall go to Oxford at once, and stay up for the Easter vacation. Will you not go to St. John's Wood with me before I leave?'

Sir Theophilus looked a little scared.

'Better write, my boy,' said he. 'I will write a kind little note, and you shall take it over for me. You see, you see—if I go, and your mother does not, it will look so marked. Now,—if I write,—I can say something nice that will include her. Don't you think so?'

'Then sit down now, father, and give me your note at once.'

Sir Theophilus sat down. Charles practically dictated every word; but his father wrote them willingly; signed it, and sealed it up; then, rubbing his white old hands together, said,

'I think that will do, Charlie, boy. I think that will please her, hey?'

'Sir Theophilus,' said a stately man at the door, 'my lady wishes to speak to you.'

'Oh! Ah! Yes! I will come, James,' said the culprit, looking horribly guilty. 'Put that in your pocket, Charlie. Don't leave it lying about. Never leave letters lying about, at any time, you know. No, no, it is dangerous. And, Charlie, go at once while I am talking to your mother.'

Charles laughed heartily; so heartily that he infected even the old man, pleased with his simple cunning.

'Well,' said Mabel that evening, 'your father's consent was all we bargained for. Now, Charles, we must help each other to bear the waiting. We may write to each other, you know, now.'

'And May, I *will* work hard.'

'I know you will, dear.'

So they parted, to begin their long, weary, stern chase after happiness. When or how would it end? It was cheered by a frequent correspondence, which kept up the young man's spirits, and was an immense boon to both. Charles set himself resolutely to work, and, before the long vacation, had made great progress. None of his family saw him in the meantime, though he wrote often, always cheerily. Poor Theophilus looked out for those letters as the one bright spot in the week for him; and Charles himself looked upon those which he received from Mabel with equal longing.

CHAPTER II.

HORACE STUDIES FROM LIFE.

After this great excitement, the Selbys' house settled down into a more normal state, and quieter counsels prevailed in other people's lives also.

Sir Theophilus and Lady Sarah found their presence in town necessary for some considerable time, and moved into their own house in St. James's Square. Lady Sarah refused all society, upon plea of her husband's health, which continued to be very indifferent, and quiet was advised by his medical attendants. It suited her

ladyship to dispense with gaieties, but she was glad to have the distractions of London life to deter her from constantly fretting over the impending lawsuit.

This moved very slowly; nothing fresh had occurred, nor had any date been fixed upon for the trial. Persons had been sent to Rome to make inquiries as to where Mr. Grenfell had lived, and how; where he died; what medical men had attended him; where he had been buried, and what had become of his wife afterwards.

Strange to say, no trace whatever could be found of him; the waters of oblivion seemed to have swept over the whole story, and left no single memory of his name. No evidence of either his life or death could be discovered, and the lawyers were all at a nonplus. They could work up no case to carry before a court; simple denial of Rosewarne's statements was of no use, especially in face of the

fact that nobody of any sort occupied the coffin which had always been supposed to hold the corpse of the heir. Without further knowledge, this only strengthened the valet's story.

Rosewarne, doubtless, held the clue, but totally refused to reveal it. This was a suspicious circumstance in itself. Had all been clear and above board, there would have been no need for this mystery. Something was wrong; some link loose; but what? Where?

All that the lawyers could do was to procrastinate, to cast hindrances and delays in the way, in hope of some fresh light being thrown upon the subject by long consideration of it,—by accident, by chance.

If Mr. Grenfell had lived and died in Rome, in Rome the key to the mystery lay. Rosewarne said that he was no Italian scholar, and could not remember

either the names of the places or the people. Some of the latter had only been known to him as 'La Signora,' or by a Christian name. Mr. Grenfell had needed no attention or nursing, he had been shot dead. Where then was the surgeon who attested to his death? Rosewarne did not know his name. He believed he was dead. How then was he aware that he was dead? He had heard so; he had never known much of him, he had only been in the house for a day. He had managed the funeral. Where was the house situated? He could not remember the name of the street, it was Viâ something. Mr. Grenfell had occupied apartments only, and he had never heard the landlady called anything but 'La Signora.' He could not speak Italian in those days. There was a woman servant called Mariuccia and a man called Baldo in the house. All these people were old, and probably existed no

longer. He might as well have said that his master had lived in London, in a street called Something Road; that his landlady was called Smith, and had servants named Mary and John.

Further than this the man either could not or would not reveal a hint. He had brought back to Tregarthen all his poor young master's personal effects, and the old baronet had desired him to keep them, —he wished to see none of them again. Among them were a few books, a watch, chain, and seals, and two or three rings, as well as other trinkets. A seal bore the family crest; 'C. Grenfell' was engraved inside the outer case of the gold hunting-watch; and there was a ring with the coat of arms. One or two of the books had Grenfell book-plates pasted inside the covers, and the name of Grenfell written in them. Several were Italian books, presumably purchased in Rome, for one or

two had been bought second-hand, and had other names written in them, with addresses in Rome; but these addresses yielded no trace of the young Englishman.

Rosewarne was a clever actor. He had the air of perfect frankness, perfect willingness to give all the information in his power, but this, really, amounted to nothing. The lawyers were completely at fault.

Meantime, the Courtneys returned to town in May, and Dorothea was once more at home, very much polished and improved by her sojourn abroad, but Dorothea still, impetuous, hot-tempered, and a little more tainted by worldly wisdom than before.

Her drawings were really masterly. Mr. Selby was delighted with her progress; he placed her under the best of tutelage, and urged her forward by all the means in his power. She was to exhibit in more than one water-colour exhibition next

spring, and was working very hard at her pictures.

All her leisure time was claimed by Miss Courtney, to whom her companionship seemed to be indispensable, and her own home people saw but little of her. Mabel was disappointed. She had looked forward so keenly to the pleasure of having long talks, and much sympathy from her sister; and not only did she scarcely see her from morning to night, but Dorothea carried Horace away in her train; and Mr. Selby was much more taken up with Dora's artistic prospects and work than by his eldest daughter's affairs, so paramount a short time ago.

Mabel had only her mother to fall back upon;—a never-failing friend; but her mother was much occupied by Steenie's health, which continued to be extremely delicate, and by all the multifarious needs of the others.

Mabel was her beloved hand-maid, but Evangeline and Felicia were growing up fast into usefulness, and May could not avoid a slight feeling of being loosened from home. It saddened her a little; and perhaps it created a sort of attitude which caused her to look on some around her as if she were an outsider, not one of them, as of old.

It was Horace whose proceedings first gave her this feeling, and aroused an uneasiness. His work was neglected, and he was far more in the Courtneys' house than his sister thought good for him.

Miss Augusta Courtney was in much better health, she seemed to have taken a new lease of life; and renewed vigour of constitution added renewed animation, spirit, liveliness, which gave fresh grace to her former rather sentimental, die-away loveliness.

Lady Dereham's marriage and her own

enjoyment in society made the house very gay; and the great interest for the present lay in a large entertainment shortly to take place in honour of the bride; and of which the chief attraction was to be the most artistic tableaux-vivants.

Endless were the discussions between Dorothea and Augusta as to what scenes would lend themselves best to such representations, and some very beautiful ones were arranged.

The chief difficulty lay in a final group to include all the young people, some of whom were difficult to be disposed of.

Dorothea, at Augusta's request, begged her father to arrange some groups for them, but he would not. 'Waifs and Strays' was in the exhibition, and had brought him commissions for more portraits than he cared to undertake. He declared himself to be far too busy for nonsense like that.

'Besides, Dolly,' said he, 'a wise man never puts his head into a hornet's nest. I could not please all; and, ten to one, should end by pleasing none. No, ma'am, I know a trick worth two of that.'

Dorothea could not prevail; but Charles, having been quite unpersuadable on the point of spending a few weeks in St. James's Square, to make one in these representations, was struck with the bright idea of engaging Horace to pose them, and Horace consented.

'This will not matter much, for once,' said his father, 'but you ought to be sticking to your work, my boy. These fine ladies and their may-games will do you more harm than they are worth if they take you from your studies.'

'It is as you say, father, only for once,' said Horace.

But the warning did not seem to be undeserved, for Horace became excessively

restless, and the incessant need for his presence at the councils of the young ladies consumed an endless amount of time. Mabel became uneasy at the change in him, and bethought herself of what Dorothea had confided to her on the evening when she had first arrived at Tregarthen.

'Dora dear,' said she, 'do you think that Horace is wise to be so much at the Courtneys? Do you remember what you told me about his having fallen in love with Miss Augusta, and her not liking him? Is it not a pity for him to be encouraged to flutter about her so much, like a moth about a candle?'

'It is not my doing,' said Dorothea. 'I have warned him, and it must be on his own head now. But everyone is not as much in earnest as you over these affairs, Duchess. You can't measure other people by yourself.'

'Do you consider that Horace's fancy is passing off, then?' pursued Mabel.

'Or Augusta's coming on?' was the cool reply.

'Dorothea! You make me very uneasy. He ought not to be so much there, in that case.'

'My dear Duchess, do not trouble yourself about other people's love matters. As I tell you, everyone is not as much *au grand sérieux* as yourself.'

'You are better able to judge than I, dear. You see them together, and I don't; but I feel uncomfortable.'

'It is nothing to you, my dear,' replied Dorothea, with that elderly assumption of superior worldly wisdom which sat so oddly upon her youth.

So the discussions and the meetings went on every day.

The final group for the tableaux, at one time likely to prove an endless cause

for disagreement, was at last fixed upon. It must consist of the four seasons, each represented by a pair of Watteau figures,—gentleman and lady, in Jemmy Jessamy guise. A quadrille in costume was to open the ball following the tableaux.

Augusta was determined to pose and to dance with one of her Courtney cousins; but her style harmonized best with spring, his with autumn.

Horace posed her for spring in so very lovely an attitude,—gazing upwards, beckoning to the swallows to arrive; Dorothea designed for her so extremely becoming a dress of softest drapery in faintest green, bedropped with clusters of apple-blossom,—that she would not give up the character.

Lady Courtney, who had replaced Charles Grenfell in her secret heart by an extremely eligible young man, wanted her daughter to choose him for her part-

ner, but Augusta found fifty good reasons for having nothing to do with him, the first being that no consideration would induce her to be bored with him.

The countess had also found for her nephew an heiress whose full-blown charms made autumn the only possible figure of the four in which she could be brought to look even passably well. She was eloquent upon the necessity of Charles being the sportsman, with gun and hawk; his brown skin, dark hair, and stalwart form cutting him out for it.

But Charles, had Mabel not been in question, would have been equally determined to escape close juxtaposition with the Bacchante crowned with purple grapes and wheat-ears. Had there been no other reason for his remaining in Oxford, that would have sufficed.

Mabel grew more and more uneasy at what she heard from her sister. She per-

ceived that Horace was less and less attentive to his classes; less and less at home; becoming more and more absorbed in the details of the Courtney festivities and decorations.

She knew that these would never pay him; that he must give more strict attention to his work if he were to succeed in his chosen profession. She doubted as to whether she ought to speak to her father, but disliked the appearance of interfering or tale-bearing; and Frank was so busy with his commissions for portraits that his family saw very little of him.

Some of his sitters were gentlemen; and, of course, his own ladies avoided the studio when they came. One was a young Court beauty, who was being painted in her costly Drawing-Room attire, jewels and all; so Frank preferred painting her in her own mother's house to taking the responsibility of having such valuable

articles in his. Another commission was a group of little children with a dog, who could not all be brought to St. John's Wood conveniently. Between one thing and another, Mr. Selby was scarcely seen by his own family that summer.

So Mabel waited and doubted, and tried to trust the discretion of her brother and sister, while uneasiness destroyed all faith in it. Horace avoided her; Dorothea patronised her. The poor girl grew sorely perplexed. Her doubts reached their climax when, upon entering her brother's room one day, not knowing that he was there, but intent upon some housewifely duties, she found him posed before the mirror, painting his own portrait.

With his sheaf of brushes in his hand, and the toilet-table arranged in a suitable light, he was trying the effect of now a sweet smile, anon a melodramatic wildness of air, and then a glance of scorn.

'Horace!' cried she. 'What on earth are you doing? making faces at yourself in the glass like that!'

'Why do you come bursting in upon a fellow in that way?' exclaimed he, angrily. 'I thought I had locked the door.'

'Are you in your right senses, to lock yourself up that you may make eyes at yourself in that ridiculous fashion? Why are you not at the life-school?'

'Look here, May, I sha'n't stand your jawing. What right have you to find fault with what I choose to do? Mind your own business.'

He had never spoken so roughly to her before, and the tears rose to his sister's eyes. It was what Dorothea had said, only Dora expressed herself less rudely. Was she being drawn away from them by her engagement? Was she losing her place in their hearts? becoming less in touch with those so dear to her?

The feeling was one of intense pain.

And why was Horace wasting his time in so absurd a fashion? She never saw that sketch of himself completed: he worked for some days, in all his leisure time, with a locked door; and she knew that he carried a canvas out of the house with him one morning, and never brought it back.

Where had he taken it? To whom was such a thing of value?

Another day, Steenie, sitting on his brother's knee, pulled open the locket which hung at the end of his watch-chain, exclaiming,

'Oh, Horace, why did you take mamma out of your little gold box? Where did you get the picture of this other lady to put in?'

'Let me see?' cried Amanda.

'You are a naughty boy, Steenie, to open what does not belong to you,' said

Horace, testily. 'Look at your fingers, how sticky they are! You and Amanda must go and get your hands washed at once.'

'You are very cross!' grumbled Steenie, who was somewhat spoiled in these days. 'Charlie lets me open his little gold box, and look at the Duchess there. Why mayn't I look at your pretty lady, too.'

Mabel glanced at her elder brother, and met a guilty look out of a scarlet face. She said nothing, but took the children quietly away, and pondered over the incident with great uneasiness.

CHAPTER III.

MISS ROSE SURPRISES HER FRIENDS.

Mabel was extremely uneasy; but even her doubts and fears were overpowered shortly by the astounding intelligence which arrived one day from Withiel.

It came upon the Selby family like a thunder-clap. From Frank himself, downwards, not one of them had ever received a hint at what was going on, or was prepared in the least for the surprise.

Miss Rose was going to be married!

'Good heavens!' cried Frank. 'Who would have thought of it! Gog and Magog will set up frivolous flirtations

with Queen Anne's statue next, and the Griffin will build a nest, and hatch china eggs! Wifie, do you think that Rose has not made a mistake? Do you think she knew what Grant meant? He asked her to take more potatoes, and she thought he meant himself.'

'Don't be ridiculous,' said Mrs. Selby. 'It is a very suitable thing, very suitable indeed. Rose is not too old, by any means, to attract a sensible man; she is a very pretty woman still; she is cut out for a clergyman's wife, and will make an admirable step-mother to that poor little girl.'

'True, my dear, very true, Grant—ed. Precisely so. It reminds me of the Vicar of Wakefield's courtship; and also recalls my own early days, and the considerations that prevailed chiefly with me when I solicited you to do me the honour of accepting my hand and empty purse.'

'For shame, Frank,' said his wife, colouring with the pretty carnation he loved to call up in her cheek. 'Besides, Mr. Grant's purse is not by any means empty. It is a very nice thing for dear Rose, in every way. You ought to be very much pleased.'

'So I am, old lady, mightily pleased. Grant *is* rather like a potato, though. His head is knobby, and so is his nose. His face is round and firm, and his eyes well set in it. When he waxes warm in preaching, he steams ahead grandly, and becomes flowery. Yes, the potato is his type. Rose will find him solid eating, too.'

'I think the goose is your type, Frank,' said Mrs. Selby.

'Yes, my dear, I am so sage,' said he; and both laughed like a couple of children.

Much excitement was caused among the young people by the announcement, which

was very popular among them. A wedding is always popular with the young; it means frolic for them, pretty things, festivity, change, amusement. Both Mabel and Horace took particular interest in this unexpected event; and Mabel wrote so warm and sympathizing a letter to her aunt, as produced a reply begging her to go down and assist in the preparations.

It would be such a comfort, wrote Miss Rose, if Mabel would come; for the similarity in their situations rendered her so suitable an adviser in all the perplexity of details.

Mr. Grant wished the wedding to take place at once, and there were so many things to be considered. She would like to be married in grey silk, but did not think it would do, as she was not a widow, and it might remind him that he was a widower, which would be so unkind on such a day. But brown did not suit her; and would

blue be too smart? Dear Mabel had so much taste, would she advise?

And must she have bridesmaids when he was a widower? for Elizabeth said it would be absurd at her age, but every respect ought to be paid to him, and Jane would do nothing but cry, she was so upset at the thought of the separation; and they had always done everything together, even dressing alike, which would not be suitable now. And Letitia was so nervous, and dear Lady Sarah away, and she herself felt all at sea.

Dorothea's practical lips curled scornfully as she read the incoherent letter.

'Tell her to be married in her travelling-dress, and make no fuss about it,' said she.

'No, no,' said Mabel. 'She would like to have a pretty dress for the day itself, and there can be no reason why she should not, is there, mamma? All the two

parishes will be present, and there will be visiting afterwards, for which she must have proper things.'

'Certainly, my dear. It is the occasion for doing the affair nicely. She must have a wedding-gown, of course. She would look very nice in blue with white lace, and it would make a pretty dinner-dress afterwards. She seems to incline towards blue.'

'I would like to put her into something that would suggest her name of Rose,' said May. 'She would look so nice if we could find her a pale grey or dove-coloured silk, brocaded with little pink rosebuds.'

'You ladies must put your heads together, and look out for what is suitable,' said Frank. 'The money-tree has a fair crop upon it this year, for once, and I will find the wherewithal. Mabel must go, of course, and mamma and I will go down for the wedding. Get it fixed for an early

day, Duchess, if you can. I am going to be intensely busy soon, and certainly could not go down next month.'

He wrote a kind, brotherly letter to Rose, and sent her a cheque for a hundred pounds, to be spent upon her preparations. His sister was almost hysterical with the suddenness of her new prospects and their brightness. How could she ever spend so large a sum upon herself? Her sisters, at any rate, must have new dresses out of such liberality, as well as she.

'It may very well be managed so,' said Mrs. Selby. 'Nothing need be very costly, you know.'

Mabel selected patterns, did endless shopping, wrote letters, and prepared to go down to Cornwall at an early date.

Mr. Grant wished for as little delay as possible. He had met with infinite difficulty over unaccustomed housekeeping

since his first wife died. His home was uncomfortable, his little girl running wild, and he could find neither housekeeper nor governess to his taste.

It was a sensible, rather than a romantic marriage, but there was no reason why it should not be a happy one, and everybody looked upon it in that light.

Even Miss Jane reconciled herself to the loss of her sister before long. Rose was only going into the adjacent parish. Her new home would be within a walk, and she would have a pony-carriage which would make frequent meetings practicable. She dried her tears, and plunged into the mysteries of the *trousseau* with a cheerful mind.

When wedding presents began to arrive, all four sisters were taken by surprise from their beauty, their number, and the quantity of kindly thought in high and low

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which they presented. They had never dreamt of this, and their gratification was proportionate.

All the young people wished to send presents. The younger girls set to work upon an elaborate tea-cloth; the twins upon a fretwork bracket. Mabel had not much time to spare, but painted a fan, to suit the wedding-dress, in beautiful wreaths of wisteria upon ivory-tinted satin. Dorothea sent a drawing of flowers, and Steenie sighed,

'I have nuffin to send, and can't make nuffin, but she may have my dog's tooth.'

'I do not think that would be so pretty a present as the rest of us will have for her,' said Mabel, 'and Amanda has no tooth to send. Suppose you two and baby send your photos, in a pretty frame, to stand upon auntie's new drawing-room table? She would like that.'

'Will it take *all* our money to buy it?' asked Steenie. 'I have four shillings and twopence, and a bright farthing.'

'And I have a whole sixpence, and a freepenny-bit, and a penny with a hole in it,' chimed in Amanda.

'And baby has nuffin at all,' concluded Steenie.

'I think, if you gave a shilling, and Amanda her sixpence, and I gave baby a sixpence for her share, that we could get the frame. You let me see while I am shopping.'

It was singular that Mabel should have been able to purchase such a very pretty triptych frame for so small a sum, but then, as Steenie said, 'the Duchess always knew where to get bargains better than anybody else.'

'What are you going to send, Horace?' asked Mabel.

'Send that extraordinary head of your-

self, with the sentimental eyes,' said Dorothea.

Horace scowled at her.

'Shut up,' said he.

Dora laughed, mockingly.

'Oh! how sweet a picture! How quite too—too——'

It was just in Augusta's style of rapturous affectation, and Mabel looked at Horace, who rose and left the room.

'Don't tease Horace,' said Mabel.

'Horace is an unmitigated—hum, hum, ha——' said Dora.

'Did he really give that thing to Miss Courtney?' asked the uneasy Duchess.

'It hangs in her sanctum of sanctums,' replied the other.

'We really ought to do something about it.'

'Nonsense! It is a fine play for the silly children while it lasts, but they will tire of it soon. You will find it all

right when you return from Withiel, May.'

'I hope so; but, Dora, don't let them go too far.'

'My dear girl, there is such a man as Lord Belsize in the world; and our dear mamma is *so* fond of him! What a guy he does look as spring, to be sure, with his scarlet hair against Augusta's apple-blossom. You should see him looking awkward and wretched, not knowing what to do with his bag of wheat, and growing even redder than his hair under the difficulty of being graceful with it.'

Mabel laughed a little.

'I saw him at the Academy with her. It is really hard on him that Horace should be so handsome. It is almost Hyperion to a satyr. But, you know, Dorothea——'

'Yes, I know; but, as I have often said, what can I do?'

'Augusta is really a very sweet girl,

too. She came up so pleasantly, quite affectionately, to chat with me. She said so warmly that she hoped I understood why she did not come to the house. She did not like to run counter to her aunt, and her own mamma thought it best not; but, "dear Miss Selby," she said, "Charlie and I are immense allies, we always have been so, and he tells me *everything*. We shall be the greatest of friends one day." I could be very fond of her.'

'I am,' said Dorothea. 'She is a very good girl underneath all that fashion and finery, quite unspoilt. But all the Courtneys have hearts, May, that is what makes me put up with the position I have there. They have all been very kind to me.'

'You deserve every kindness that anyone could show you, Dora dear,' exclaimed Mabel, affectionately. 'How many girls at your age would have relieved their fathers of their expenses like you have done?'

'And how many ever save their expenses as you do, May? Teaching the children like a regular governess, and helping mamma so much!'

'I am so glad that mamma is going to Cornwall. It did her so much good last year.'

'And how pleased papa is about Aunt Rose! Well, if he does not deserve some pleasant experiences, who does, I would like to know! Dear papa!'

The talk had wandered away from Horace altogether, but the difficulties regarding the tableaux had by no means lessened.

Lady Courtney managed to replace the impecunious Courtney cousin by Lord Belsize. Augusta yielded with unexpected amiability when the point was pressed; but his lordship's attentions met with no favour from the young lady, nor did his suit advance.

Charles could not be persuaded to take any part in the festivities, but he took a week's end, to visit his father and mother, and refresh his eyes by a sight of Mabel before she went down to Cornwall. The wedding was fixed for the third week in July.

Charles arrived on the evening before Mabel went to Cornwall, bringing his own and the Courtneys' presents for Miss Rose.

Pleased with the opportunity of acknowledging that lady's attentions to Augusta the year before, Sir Thomas and Lady Courtney had selected some very pretty jewelry as their gifts; Augusta sent an extremely choice afternoon set of china tea-things, 'in memory,' she wrote, 'of the many pleasant tea-drinkings they had enjoyed together;' and Charlie's present was a silver kettle, 'because he meant to enjoy so many in time to come.'

'Mrs. Selby,' said he, 'will you let me

stay and have tea with you? I have escaped the dinner at home, my father and mother are going to the countess this evening.'

'We shall only be too glad,' said Mrs. Selby.

'Come then, Mabel, there is time for a walk first. Let it be a whole evening of enjoyment.'

Mabel beamed with pleasure. It was the first time that so delightful a thing had occurred, and they were soon out in the pleasant summer air.

'I shall be pegging away in Oxford again before you come back, May,' said Charles. 'My father and mother are going down for the wedding. My mother is so fond of Miss Rose. I cannot think what she will do without her. This marriage of hers will, as it were, destroy the habits of her life. Mabel, she will be driven back upon us, now.'

'I wish she could love me,' sighed Mabel.

'My father does,' said Charles, confidently. 'It is lucky for my mother that I don't mean to make Miss Spencer her daughter, but it would serve her almost right if I did. I wonder how the countess would like her for one, if Coventry or Algernon took her?'

'It might be better for you if you were obedient to your elders,' said May, saucily.

'It might,' pronounced he, 'and then again it mightn't. Good gracious, May, what absurd things people do when they begin to meddle and make with their children's lives. Even their own children. Aunt Diana has *some* sense in her, generally, but she has married Louisa to *such* a dolt, and Henrietta to a man with no single idea beyond farming and fattening cattle. And now she has picked out a

regular lout for poor Augusta, with all her strong taste for beauty and grace.'

'Don't you think that she likes him, then?' asked Mabel.

'Like him? Have you ever seen him?'

'Yes, in the street.'

'Well, fancy, is it likely? He would be a better match for her than even I would have been if this terrible law-suit had not come in the way of my prospects. But Augusta and I always understood each other. We are very fond of each other, we always were, but too much on the footing of brother and sister for any sentiment. No, May, if he were in Belsize's place, I know—at least I think I know whom she would like, but it is wholly out of the question.'

'Whom do you mean? Do tell me, Charles dear, I have some anxiety about it. Do you mean——'

'Yes, I do mean——'

'Charlie!'

'Mabel!'

'It would never do.'

'No, it would never be allowed. It was something which he said to me one day, just after you were so good to me, that set me thinking, and opened my eyes. But it would be a worse affair than ours. The elders would never allow it.'

'No; besides, it would never *do*.'

'I don't know about that. Augusta has more in her than you would fancy, only she has never had a chance to show it, and I doubt if she knows it herself. Real love does wonders for people, Mabel. See how it has set me to work. I should have been nothing but an idle, dilettante sort of fellow, if you had not come to me. But, sometimes, I think that Augusta only uses your brother as a shield against Belsize.'

'I am not at all comfortable, Charles. You must write and tell me how it goes on.'

'Of course, and you must tell me all about the elderly lovers. May, I envy them. Should you like me to take Orders, dear?'

'You must decide upon that for yourself, dear Charles,' said she. 'But I do not think a man ought to do so unless he is very earnest in his desire to enter the Church. It is the men who have become clergymen because they had a profession only, who do so much harm to the cause of religion. A man who undertakes to teach without the gift, does such widespread harm.'

'You are right, dear. I fear that I should not make a good clergyman, if I only entered the profession as a means for livelihood. May, it is odd how much more I think of these things, and how

much more earnest life seems to me since I have had to regard it from a different standpoint than formerly. For one thing, fellows talk to me now as one of themselves who would have let me alone, thinking me too grand for their companionship at one time. The sort of men I used to go about with—Coventry, and his set—seem very empty, poor sort of fellows now. I could not go back to that kind of life, even were I ever to be rich again.'

'I am glad to hear you say that, Charlie. It does always seem sad to me when people spend so much money and leisure upon nothing but pleasure or self-indulgence.'

'But, May, will you be satisfied if I get a clerkship in the Home Civil Service?'

'Quite, dear. Where you are happy, I should be so.'

'See, May; such a neat little house as that would do for us. We might be very jolly there.'

'My dear Charles, that house would cost a hundred-and-fifty pounds a-year, and could not be kept up without a man and three maids! The Home Civil Service will not admit of that.'

'What a practical little woman it is! I thought I was very moderate in my ideas. Let us see what sort of a humble cot you would fix upon.'

And they went merrily about, building castles in the air; a pair of very happy children, in spite of all.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FIRST WEDDING IN THE SELBY FAMILY.

Charles and Mabel extended their walk till they were late for tea; but something had also detained Mr. Selby, and this was of no consequence. Frank came in, looking fagged. He was working very hard, and said he would be glad when these portrait commissions were finished.

'They are drudgery of the worst kind,' said he. 'Not only must one work within lines, but be bored with making talk the while, when one would rather be silent. I hate portrait-painting.'

He seemed glad to see Charles, however,

and sat down to enjoy a rest and chat with him, in a way which was a comfort to Mabel's sore spirit. If her engagement was costing her much in some ways, it was at least a consolation to her to observe how her lover had wound himself around her father's and mother's hearts. She loved him the better for it.

'Well, Grenfell,' said Frank, lying back comfortably in his chair, 'how does the law-suit go on? Is there anything new?'

'Varley's people have discovered something which may lead to more, sir: but I think little of it myself. They have discovered that my uncle sent Rosewarne home, with the empty coffin, from Genoa, not Rome. As all trace of his having ever lived in Rome at all has failed, they are now searching Genoa, thinking that he might have settled there. This seems to me but a slight hope.'

'I have a better hint for your lawyers

than that,' said Mr. Selby. 'I am thinking of setting up a private detective business, with Steenie here as chief clerk, for I am very proud of my acuteness in having pounced upon it.'

'Do let me hear what your acuteness has produced, sir,' said Charles.

'Why, this young hero began asking me questions yesterday about a town in Italy, where the streets were all made of water instead of stones, and boats used instead of carriages. It seems that Tommaso Verdi described the place to him one day when he came to sit to me, and I was obliged to keep him waiting. Steenie showed him his scrap-book, to amuse him the while, and there is a view of the Grand Canal in the book. Tommaso said he knew that place, he had lived there, and there his mother had died.'

'Tommy told me his mamma was taken to be buried in a boat,' cried Steenie.

'I should like to be buried in a boat.'

'So should I,' exclaimed Amanda, 'but I don't like Tommy. He eat up all my chocolates, and made faces at me when I wanted some. They were my chocolates, not his, and I did not mean to give him all, and Steenie none.'

'I did not want your chocolates,' said Steenie, 'but Tommy is greedy, awfully greedy.'

'I have written a line to Mr. Barlow, to acquaint him with this,' resumed Frank. 'When the clue runs tangled at one end, it may be as well to try the other. If the origin of these children be traced clearly, it may be proved that they, at least, are no Grenfells at all.'

'Are these the children on whose behalf Rosewarne claims Tregarthen, then?' asked Charles, surprised.

'Oh, yes. Did you not know?'

'No. Rosewarne has been very reticent

about the alleged heir, or his lawyer has been so for him. He will only say that he will be produced at the proper time.'

'This is the boy, then.'

'Whew!' whistled Charles.

'Tommy was not always called Tommy,' announced Steenie, between the mouthfuls of bread-and-milk, which he was consuming on a high chair by his father's side.

'Was he not, my son,' said Frank, passing a fond hand over the boy's curls. 'What was he called?'

'Gee-gee,' said Steenie.

'That is no name,' said Charles. 'He meant a horse when he told you that.'

'No, he did not. He said he was always called Gee-gee in Italy, and Tommy was only English for it.'

'You have made some mistake about that, my dear,' said Mabel.

'No, I have not,' persisted Steenie. 'Gee-gee is short for something, like the

Duchess is for Mabel, and they called him that because his papa is called the proper name like our mamma is called yours. His papa is called a long name, too ; something like Manny, and a kettle.'

All laughed at this, but Charles asked,

'Is his papa's proper name Luigi, do you think, Steenie?'

'That's it,' said the boy. 'You say it rightly. Looi gee-gee Manny kettle.'

'Luigi Manochetti!' exclaimed Charles, in a low voice, looking at Mr. Selby.

'Babes and sucklings!' said that gentleman. 'It seems to me that we have all been extremely "Verde" ourselves, to believe Master Sam's story so easily.'

'I will see Barlow after 'Mabel has started to-morrow,' said Charles. 'Steenie little knows of what good he has been. Has Gee-gee got a papa, Steenie?'

'No, his papa rowed boats on the water-streets, and he fell out of one and was

drowned one night; and then another papa came, and he used to fight with his mamma, and beat him and Carlotta, and hurt them very much. And then his mamma died, and was taken away in a boat and buried; and then they went to live with somebody else who brought them to London, and they had a hand-organ to play tunes, and a monkey. Papa, may I have a monkey?'

'You are a little monkey yourself, my boy,' replied Frank.

'No, I aren't,' remonstrated Steenie.

'Steenie has a very consecutive history of Mr. Gee-gee,' remarked Charles. 'It should dispose of that young gentleman as a claimant.'

'I am afraid that too much reliance should not be put upon anything that Tommaso says,' demurred Mr. Selby. 'That young rascal is an awful young liar. Sam has a handful in him, but I

don't see why he allows himself to be plagued with him unless he is really Thomasine's grandson.'

'It is a tangled web, but we will try to ferret out the truth of this story, at any rate,' said Charles.

'Nurse is very angry with Sam,' put in Mrs. Selby's unfrequent voice. 'Nurse is all on your side, Charles; she has not a good word for Sam. All the women are your friends. Nancy was here the other day, as full of wrath as nurse. She and Sam have quarrelled bitterly over it; she says that poor Thomasine was a disgrace to the whole family, and there was no need for him to rake up the poor thing's misdeeds now that she is cold in her grave. I fear that her life was an unsavoury one, and will not bear close inspection. Sam's wife does not like having those children there. They are not nice children; they give a great deal of trouble, and she and

Tamson have had words with him about them.'

'My friend Sam cannot be having a very pleasant life of it just at present,' said Mr. Selby, 'if all his ladies are set against him like that.'

'Don't call him your friend Sam, please, father,' pleaded Mabel.

'No, I will call him yours. Has she ever come out yet in your presence, Charles, with all her colours flying, and all her guns popping off?'

'Not yet, sir. I feel rather like the stoker, though, with my hand upon the safety-valve.'

Mabel looked appealingly at them both. Her father only laughed; but Charles could not bear the reproach in her eyes, and caved in at once. He turned the conversation back to Steenie and his discoveries; but the child knew nothing more, and, the more they discussed them,

the more perplexed they felt about them.

Mabel went down to Withiel next day, and found all four of her aunts so upset from their ordinary calm dignity, and so uncertain how to comport themselves beneath the new developments which ruled their present lives, that she was greatly amused. How her Aunt Rose had ever, in the first instance, received Mr. Grant's addresses, how he had ever ventured to propose, were mysteries which she never did fathom.

Her other aunts gave her no information; Miss Selby was more rigid in her propriety than ever, Miss Letitia was hysterical upon the faintest allusion to the subject, and Miss Jane tearful. All were pleased with her selections of finery, and charmed with the presents from the young ones; but not one of the four breathed a hint as to the *raison d'être* for all these pretty purchases. Even the gentleman

was not named until Miss Selby remarked, in the course of the next day, as if by chance remembrance,

'We expect the Rev. Mr. Grant to dinner, Mabel.'

The Rev. Mr. Grant arrived; he was received in full conclave, and, to Mabel's intense diversion, he appeared to the full as much afraid of his lady-love as his lady-love was of him.

'I wonder if she has ever called him Lionel yet?' thought Mabel, accustomed to love-making of so much more impulsive a character.

She watched them furtively all the evening, with a little malice in her eyes. He sat beside her aunt when they returned to the drawing-room after dinner; but the one and only remark which he volunteered was that 'Diggory Jones was very grateful for the flannel garment which you kindly made for him.'

Miss Rose stammered out,

'Oh, ah! Yes! I am glad he finds it useful.'

For an hour and a half, by the time-piece on the mantel-shelf, did that blessed man sit on a low chair, his knees a little apart, twisting a paper-knife about, as if it were an occupation of the most absorbing interest.

At last he rose to go, and the comedy became intensely funny.

He evidently considered it as *de rigueur* to kiss his *fiancée* on taking leave. He was willing to do his duty like a man, but could neither overcome his own shyness nor her reticence.

She gave him her hand across the corner of the table, keeping that useful but solid article of furniture well between them, as a rampart.

He glanced this way and that.

'Good-night, R—R—Rose,' said he, bashfully.

'Good-night,' said she, amiably.

He held out his hand, and she placed two fingers gingerly on his palm.

'Good-night, my—my—my—dear,' said he.

'Good-night,' replied she again.

It would be impossible for the most ardent lover to embrace a lady across a rosewood console table. He was embarrassed by this consciousness; he hummed, hawed, hesitated, did not go, nor did he sit down again.

'Good—good—good-night,' said he for the third time, and tried to move round the corner so as to come into closer quarters; but, with the most innocent appearance of blindness towards his intention, she got behind a chair. He turned red.

'Good-night. A—a—a—good-night once more,' said he, in desperation.

'Good-night,' said she, cheerfully, without looking at him, but turning as red as he.

He gave it up hopelessly, and went.

'Good gracious!' thought Mabel. 'How ever did the man get married to his first wife? No wonder she died!'

She witnessed this little drama day after day. It never varied; nor at any other time did any approach to a warmer or more intimate footing between them appear.

Mabel would have given something to know whether the dreadful deed had ever been or would ever be perpetrated. Clearly the wedding had better take place soon if it were ever to come off, and permit them to abandon this uncomfortable sense of unfulfilled duty over their wooing. The sooner they settled into every-day life the better and happier for both.

And it did come off soon, being a

very pretty and quite a brilliant affair.

All the servants at Tregarthen loved Miss Rose, and vied with each other as to who should help most. The housekeeper begged leave to make the cake, the cook employed his utmost skill in the concoction of wonderful dishes for the breakfast-table, the gardener half emptied his hot-houses to decorate the church and the cottage. Never was there a greater profusion of flowers to be seen, more delicious pyramids of fruit, or choicer bouquets. The school children, whom Lady Sarah arrayed for the occasion in new pink cotton frocks, and straw hats with white ribbon, strewed flowers before the bride's feet, and were feasted afterwards in the gardens of the Hall; and the butler, having sought leave from Sir Theophilus to provide the wine for the wedding-breakfast, whispered to the bride as he dispensed it with his own hands,

'Tis the old brown seal, Miss Rose. Try a drop, do 'ee now.'

Rose made a very nice central figure, her dress was becoming, and she was so touched by all the evidences of attachment displayed so lavishly around her, as to be a very pleasing mixture of smiles, blushes, and tears. Grant, at the close of the ceremony, plucked up heart, and kissed her like a man; pluming himself apparently, as soon as he had accomplished the fact, as though he congratulated himself upon his pluck. Miss Rose—Miss Rose no longer—bore the onslaught with due meekness, but turned from him directly to embrace his little girl, who clung fondly to her already; and then she went away from the village where she had been born, and in which she had lived all her life long.

The very next morning came a letter from Dorothea which hurried her parents

back to town at once, in dismay at her news.

Horace had run away with Augusta Courtney, and married her before they were overtaken; or, indeed, before their whereabouts had been discovered.

CHAPTER V.

THE RUNAWAY MARRIAGE.

Though Sir Theophilus and Lady Sarah Grenfell would not put upon Rose Selby the mortification of refusing to be present at her wedding, they yet relaxed not a jot of their displeasure towards Mr. and Mrs. Selby, nor did her ladyship vouchsafe to take the least notice of Mabel.

She, on her side, kept out of their way, devoting herself to little Beatrice Grant, to the school children, and the old village women's tea-drinking.

Sir Theophilus spoke to her, and shook

hands kindly. She fancied that he wished to say more than 'How do you do, my dear?' but Argus eyes were upon him, and he was called away. She was not quite sure of this, but was glad of even such slight recognition, as it gave her the power of saying to her Aunt Letitia afterwards, in answer to anxious enquiries;

'Oh, yes! Sir Theophilus came and talked a little to me.'

She thought him looking haggard, and much older than last year.

Next morning came the astounding news of Horace's audacity and Augusta's wilful folly, and she was hurried back to town with her father and mother.

The nearest station to Withiel in those days was ten miles distant, and they had all been so late in rising that morning, after the fatigues of the previous day, that they could not catch the train after they read the letters from home. Mrs. Selby

required the day's rest, also, for she was quite knocked up by the wedding festivities, but they set off very early next morning.

Frank was terribly annoyed by the event. It struck at the root of all his sense of honour. Horace had been, as it were, trusted in the house, and had used the facilities so gained to rob it of its brightest jewel. His daughter was actually the young lady's companion, protector, guardian. What had she been about to permit, perhaps lend herself to such a breach of household faith?

'Did *you* know of what was going on, May?' asked he, turning angrily upon her.

'I was afraid that Horace liked her,' replied she, 'but Dorothea thought it was an idle flirtation. She assured me that there was nothing earnest in it. It was so little likely that Augusta would care for him,

that my only fear was lest he should make himself unhappy by fluttering about her.'

'Oh! those tableaux!' groaned Frank. 'I wish I had put my veto upon the whole affair. I wish I had never allowed Dolly to go there. You should have told me what you thought, May. It is hard to think that one's own children do not confide in one.'

'Dear Frank, you cannot say that of Mabel and Charles,' urged Mrs. Selby.

'Yes, I can, even of Mabel and Charles,' retorted he. 'Here were a boy and girl, whom we thought still children, deep in the matter before we had any idea of it, and a pretty peck of trouble that has brought about. But this! Who could have suspected that young idiot of doing such a thing? Are there no other pretty girls in the world, but he should seek out the one, and only one, he should never have allowed himself to think of? Are

there no other good-looking young fools in London, but that silly girl must run away with my son? What is he going to do now he has got her, I should like to know? What am I to say to Sir Thomas?'

'Poor Horace! It is not surprising that Miss Courtney liked him,' sighed Mrs. Selby.

'Poor Horace!' echoed her husband, in great contempt. 'A dishonourable young fool!'

'Dorothea was under the impression that Augusta was to marry Lord Belsize,' said Mabel, trying to extenuate her sister.

'All the more reason why she should have told your mother or me that her brother was too much there,' pronounced her father. 'Good heavens! To think that such an affair has been going on under my very eyes, and yet that I have been blind to it all through!'

'It was at least as much the concern of

Sir Thomas and Lady Courtney to take care of their own daughter,' said Mrs. Selby.

'Wifie!' cried Frank, in sterner tones than he had ever used to her in his life before, 'don't you see the sting! It is folly *there*; it is dishonour, breach of trust *here*. It cuts me to the quick to think that our boy should have been guilty of it.'

'Perhaps Miss Courtney has no fortune, or it is dependent upon Sir Thomas,' said Mabel. 'I am sure that Horrie never did it for the sake of money. If he knew, or thought that she were rich, he would never have done it.'

'And how does that exonerate him?' cried Frank, half laughing in the midst of his deep-seated vexation. 'How is he going to maintain her? Where is he to find means for bread-and-cheese, to say nothing of the wherewithal for all her fallals and finery?'

Mabel sighed. Where, indeed? Horace had sold two or three sketches, from the walls of the Dudley and provincial exhibitions, at prices ranging from two to ten guineas. Each had cost ten or twelve shillings for suitable mounting and framing first. A dealer would take some of his pieces at a guinea each. Altogether, he made about enough to pay the cost of his own wardrobe; and, for all else, was dependent upon his hard-working father.

It was too bad of him; yet Mabel could not but hope that Augusta had no fortune. She must blame Dorothea, too, in her secret heart. She had warned her sister, and been laughed at for her trouble. It was no comfort to her to be proved in the right; she would much rather have been in the wrong.

All the way up to town Frank rang the changes upon this theme, alternated by fits of brooding silence, most unwonted in

this usually cheerful-minded man. Mrs. Selby sat silent. Nervous agitation had brought on a severe headache, and she lay back in her corner, with her eyes closed, suffering and speechless.

Mabel listened to her father, shrinking in spirit at his indignation with her brother's conduct, which she shared, though in a milder degree. She dreaded the effect of such outspoken reprobation of Dorothea's part in the affair; Dorothea's temper never permitted her to take blame without angry recrimination. Would she dare to use this to her father?

There was doubt as to what Dorothea's real action in the matter had been; Mabel had often not understood her sister of late. Had Dora really been blind, or had she been acting a part, and surreptitiously favouring her brother's suit? Mabel could not bear to think this of the sister so dear to her; yet some things looked

like it, and some things were incomprehensible. How long and tedious the journey was! Would it never come to an end?

They got some tea at Swindon, which refreshed them all. Was it that the pain in her head had lessened after this, and left her exhausted? or was it because, her husband having dropped asleep, she felt herself free to indulge in her own sorrowful emotions? Mrs. Selby's tears rolled slowly from her eyes, and welled up into them again, as fast as she dried them away.

Mabel had never known her mother weep before, and the sight made her loving heart swell with a feeling more like anger against her brother and sister than she could have believed possible. How could they have afflicted that gentle loving mother to such an extent?

They were alone in the compartment, and she crept close to Mrs. Selby's side,

and held her mother's hand fast in hers.

The first sight of Dorothea was, however, a comfort to both mother and sister. Her face was swelled up with crying, and she burst into tears again as soon as she tried to speak.

'Oh, father!' she sobbed, 'it is all my fault. I don't know what you will say to me. I was conceited, and thought myself so wise and clever, and I was just a blind bat through it all. If I had possessed a grain of sense, I might have prevented it. Mab warned me, and I laughed at her. I thought I knew so much better than she, and I just knew nothing at all. Oh! what shall I do? What shall I do?'

'What do you know of it, Dora? Tell us all that you can. I cannot believe you free from blame, but wish to hear that this unhappy affair was no concerted scheme between you and Horace.'

'Concerted scheme! Oh! father, could

you think that! Oh! what shall I do? What shall I do?'

Dorothea cried pitifully.

'What you can do, Dora, is to control yourself now, and give me a rational account of how it came about.'

'But, papa, there was nothing rational to tell.'

'I can believe that,' said Frank, grimly. 'Tell me all you know.'

'I know very little. Horace was very spooney about Augusta for a long time, and she used to like talking to him about pictures and things, but we went away to Italy, and it all seemed to pass off. You know, papa, Horace is a very dear boy, of course, but he is not extraordinarily clever, indeed he is a great goose sometimes, not at all what she could set up for a hero. It never occurred to me that there was any danger of her thinking the world well lost for *him*, or for anyone.'

'You are his sister, remember. No man is a hero to his *valet-de-chambre*.'

'No, I suppose not,' sighed poor Dora. 'I can't understand a girl going crazy like this. I never saw a man who was worth it when you came to know him behind the scenes.'

'Go on with your account of what really has happened while you are waiting to do so, my dear.'

'I don't know what happened really. Augusta would not have Lord Belsize in the tableaux, and Lady Courtney said she must, and then Augusta snubbed him frightfully. Then there was a day when Sir Thomas sent for Augusta to see him in his study, and Augusta came out crying. She would not tell me what was wrong, but she was quite hysterical, and cried on my shoulder, and said that she was not like her sisters Louisa and Lady Medlington, who could put up with such dolts for

husbands. She said that she would rather never marry at all, but devote herself to art.'

'And what arts of consolation did you employ on this interesting occasion?'

'I thought she meant what she said, and was quite right. It would be dreadful to be tied to a man like Lord Belsize for life. He has not two ideas in his head. He really is worse than most men.'

'Well, and then?'

'I don't know any more, papa. Horace met her somewhere, and could not bear to see her cry, and they arranged it all in a hurry, but how, I don't know. They were married a day or two afterwards at the registrar-office, and went away together. Sir Thomas was furious. He and Lady Courtney won't believe that I had nothing to do with it, and he stormed at me, so I came away home.'

'Where are they, Dorothea?'

'I really do not know, papa. They

really told me nothing. I believe that there was nothing to tell till just the last, and that it was all done on the spur of the moment.'

Mr. Selby could not think what to do. It was too late to call on Sir Thomas that evening, he postponed it till next day; and, in the meantime, Nancy Rosewarne sent up to say that Mr. and Mrs. Horace had come to her lodgings, and that she desired her duty to Master Frank, and would do all in her power to make them comfortable.

Frank would not see them, but went early to Sir Thomas. Sir Thomas declined to see Mr. Selby. Mr. Selby wrote to him, and his letter was returned unopened. Sir Thomas would have nothing to do with so rebellious a daughter. As she had brewed, so she must bake; she could only be a stranger to her parents from this time forth.

Mrs. Selby wrote to Lady Courtney, and enclosed a heart-broken effusion from Dorothea, exculpating herself from all complicity in the affair. That letter was not returned, nor was it answered; but that afternoon Miss Josephine Bayley, Augusta's maid, arrived in a cab with all the clothes and possessions of her young mistress, as well as her own.

'My lady have dismissed me, ma'am,' said the weeping girl. 'My character be all gone, me as knew not one blessed word about what were afoot, nor had a finger in it. And me, as have known Miss Augusta—I beg your parding, ma'am—Mrs. Horace Selby,—me as have known her since she were four year old, and have waited on her this six years, and love her so dear.'

'I am extremely sorry, Bayley,' said Mrs. Selby; 'but what can I do for you?'

'Oh! ma'am, you might be so conde-

scending as to tell me where my dear young lady have took refuge to, and let me serve her still.'

'I have only just learnt where they are, my good girl,' said Mrs. Selby; 'but Mr. Selby is as displeased with Mr. Horace as Sir Thomas is, and it is certain that Mrs. Horace will be wholly unable to keep a maid.'

Bayley perfectly howled at the thought of her young mistress having brought herself into such a state of destitution.

'Let me go to her, ma'am, let me go to her this minute. I will serve her without any salary, without one farthing. I will, I assure you, ma'am. My poor, dear, sweet young lady, always so mild and so delicate, abandoned to the cold world like this!'

'There are other considerations, Bayley,' said Mrs. Selby: 'Already there has been too much acting upon impulse. You can

stay here for a while, until something has been settled. I am very sorry that you have been involved in this sad affair to your own loss. Go up to the nursery; you can sit there with Mrs. Brown, and she will find you a bed.'

Mrs. Brown was not there; Mabel was in charge, but she received Bayley kindly, and set herself to calming and soothing her. Nurse had gone off to Buckingham Street, upon learning where the culprits were. She was all for 'Master Horace,' and love at every hazard.

'Poor dears!' said she. 'Love have been one too many for them, as it have a-been for plenty before. Master won't see him! Nor the pretty dear as have given up all for the sake of him! Nor he won't let missis, nor ne'er a-one of you, go a-near to them! Well, now, that's a shame, it be, if it were fifty masters said so. Never mind, Miss May, dear; he haven't forbid

me, and I'll just slip on my bonnet and take the 'bus, and see them afore he can give his orders. You may depend upon it, for all he is so fractious now, he will be right glad in the bottom of his heart that I or somebody went to them when he comes to know. Nancy will be glad to know what to do, too.'

Mabel thought this a good plan, and encouraged nurse to go. A pretty story did she bring back!

Poor Augusta! She little anticipated the difficulties into which she was plunging. She walked out of the house in her morning-dress, and left every single thing which she possessed besides behind her. She never thought of clothes, or trinkets, or even money. She had her purse in her pocket, containing five or six pounds, but had not even her toilette apparatus with her. Not a thought did she cast towards this deficiency until she arrived as Mrs.

Horace Selby at the hotel in Brighton to which her young husband first took her. Here the habits of her whole life made her wish to dress afresh for dinner, and then first did she realize that she did not possess even a brush and comb, or a pair of slippers. She confessed the dilemma, in some confusion, to her lover, and he laughed at her.

'There are plenty of shops in Brighton, my darling,' said he. 'Give me a list of what you will require, and I will order them to be sent in.'

But Augusta knew how to buy in a grand manner, and preferred to go herself. She gave her orders in her usual lavish scale; and the tradesman, not knowing the name of Mrs. Selby, required either payment or reference. She had never paid for anything of the kind in her life before. She had no idea of the prices of what she had ordered, and all the

funds she possessed did not cover the bill.

Horace defrayed it; he had provided himself with more forethought than she, but his resources were slight, and this expense coming so immediately upon him was unlooked for. He could not restrain an exclamation of dismay.

But what was his embarrassment to hers when she found out that, though she now owned the necessary toilette apparatus, she could not use it!

She could pull down her hair easily enough, and made a shift to brush it out, but to put it up again was wholly beyond her! She had never done such a thing before, she had never dressed herself in all her days!

She made an untidy sort of an arrangement after superhuman exertions, and sat down to dinner feeling horribly uncomfortable, with nothing exactly in its right place, and obliged to keep her head in one

position until her neck ached, for her hair was so loosely confined that she expected it to come down about her shoulders every moment.

The evening came to an end at last, but next morning things were much worse. That dreadful hair *would* not go up; and, worse still, she could not get into her own clothes. Breakfast waited and waited for her, till at last Horace went to inquire the reason of her delay, and found her sobbing helplessly, in bewilderment, and a dressing-gown.

The matter was quite beyond his knowledge; he suggested applying to a chambermaid, and Augusta came down at last. The woman could assist in essentials, but her ideas as to hairdressing were Philistine. She endeavoured only to make the young lady 'neat,' whereas the young lady was used to be 'picturesque.' That evening she sent for a hairdresser to

operate, and he charged her ten shillings for the job.

Again Horace looked embarrassed, and Augusta asked him if he did not like the man's taste.

'Oh! yes, dearest. You look well in anything; it is not that, but—but—you see you have honoured a *poor* man, and the finances won't stand this.'

'Oh! dearest Horace, I am so sorry! I thought pictures sold for such quantities of money! What shall I do to be economical? Indeed, I did not mean to spend too much.'

She was quite distressed; and Horace could only kiss and comfort her.

Then occurred to him the bright idea of going to Buckingham Street, and taking up their quarters in Nancy Rosewarne's private hotel.

Nancy would not mind waiting to be paid till some arrangement could be made.

She would be their good friend, and would advise him as to what to do. He would send for Dorothea; his mother would help him; Mabel would sympathize; some *Deus ex machinâ* would appear.

So to Buckingham Street they came; and Horace had to borrow the fare of the cab which conveyed them thither from Miss Rosewarne, to begin with.

But Nancy was a proud woman to receive them, though making a feint of scolding the young man.

'Lordsakes, Mr. Horace, but you deserve the stick, that 'ee du. Whatever took 'ee to go and act in thiccee fashion! Who'd a thought it of 'ee! You'm a bad boy, and that I tell 'ee, but 'ee du show some sense in coming to me, that 'ee du. I'll take care of the pretty dear.'

Nurse told this story volubly; the dilemma was a real one, and must be met. Augusta must be taught how to wait upon

herself, and Nancy was not the sort of person to undertake the task, though her house was the best place for the young couple for the time.

Sir Thomas was implacable; Mr. Selby obdurate; the ladies compelled to submit. It was best for Bayley to go to Buckingham Street, and teach her young lady independence, while waiting for another situation; which there was little doubt but what Nancy could soon obtain for her.

As a *young* ladies'-maid it was hopeless to seek a place again; but, as attendant upon an elderly lady, the woman's previous excellent character would secure her a place shortly. Meantime, as it was pretty certain that she had lent herself to meetings between Horace and Augusta without Lady Courtney's or Dorothea's knowledge, it was only fair that she should atone for such misdemeanours by assisting in the present dilemma.

CHAPTER VI.

VARIOUS PEOPLE IN DILEMMAS.

While all these events were proceeding, Sam Rosewarne found himself involved in a peck of troubles.

His wife, his daughter, his cousin, were all in league against him. He had spoilt dear Miss Mabel's prospects, angered Mr. Selby, offended all his friends, alienated the people who had always been kind and pleasant to them all; and for what? For spite; for rancour against those who were dead and gone long ago; for imaginary offence against himself on the part of Sir Theophilus, whom nobody else disliked;

for rehabilitating the character of his sister, whose story had been forgotten years before, and whose reputation, after all, was a hopeless disgrace to them. Sir Theophilus was really a gentleman in every way; Mr. Charles was one, every inch of him; and who or what were these children? They were picked up out of the gutter; were fit for no other place; they could not even speak the Queen's English!

'Nothing will make the likes of they there young toads gentlefolks,' said Nancy.

'They will be put to school and learn,' said Sam.

'You'd better begin and teach them not to use bad language,' said his wife.

'That won't stop them from becoming gentlefolks,' quoth Sam, sardonically.

'Why don't you begin by putting them to school?' asked Mrs. Rosewarne.

'I will, so soon as the lawyers grant me an allowance for them,' answered he.

'They will never do that. Unless you make your story good, you will get nothing.'

Sam was somewhat of the same opinion, but that did not make it pleasanter to him to hear others enunciate it.

He had involved himself in more than he quite reckoned upon, and was somewhat aghast at the proportions which the law-suit had already assumed. He had never intended to institute a *cause célèbre*; but, however sick of it, he was now compelled to go on. The affair had passed beyond his own control, and become a public scandal.

His first scheme of either being bought off, or holding a rod over the head of Sir Theophilus for the rest of his life, had proved wholly chimerical. The baronet would stoop to no compromise. He either was the lawful heir, or he was not; for him there was no middle course.

And these wretched children were no less of a burden to Sam than to his wife. They were dirty in their habits, violent in their tempers, gluttonous, untruthful, and dishonest. They were ignorant, and did not want to learn; they were idle, and would not be taught usefulness. Being sharp as needles, they had picked up some idea that they were of importance to their benefactor, and they set his authority completely at defiance from that time.

Mrs. Rosewarne caught Carlotta holding up fruit-pies to her mouth, drinking the syrup contained in the dishes; Tommaso took to helping himself freely to the wines and spirits in the bar. Both children pilfered from the till by ingenuity which betrayed long training in such practices, and spent what they thus obtained in sweetmeats and penny gaffs. Nothing was safe from them; and, as Mrs. Sam expressed it, 'They were a weary handful.'

They were shrewd enough to keep out of the way of the man who had been their owner, and who averred that he had bought them. This fellow had been a tyrant, who had starved and beaten them; they hated him, and very much preferred their present quarters, which they had no intention of abandoning.

But this man, Baldino, beset Rosewarne himself, clamouring for either the return of the children, or a suitable compensation for their services. He had learnt that Sam was making a great venture on their behalf, presumably with a view to his own benefit, and he placed this compensation at an absurdly high figure.

Sam neither could nor would pay so much; and the man made his way into the public-house time after time, obstructing business, creating disturbances, and requiring to be ejected by a policeman, till the 'Cornish Arms' was getting quite a bad name.

It had become so great a nuisance, that Rosewarne now never went outside his own door without looking up and down the street to make sure that his enemy was not in sight.

Mr. Barlow had ferretted out this man, Baldino, and learnt all that he could tell, which, however, was not much.

His acquaintance with the children was but recent; he knew nothing of Thomasine, or of her marriage with Mr. Grenfell. He knew that the children's mother had lived with a man called Manochetti, since dead; but he did not think that he was their father. He did not know who their father really was. He had never heard of him, nor of their grandmother. Manochetti might have been called Luigi, he had never heard what he was called; he had known him as 'Lo monocoluccio,' because he was blind of one eye. He did not believe that the children had a father living,

no one had claimed them until Sam came forward.

Upon Mr. Selby's information, inquiries were made in Venice, but they resulted in nothing. Seek as they would, some impenetrable door appeared to close in the face of every endeavour before they penetrated far into it.

Sam Rosewarne alone had the key to the mystery, and he stuck to his story with a dogged persistency in the face of all remonstrances. Thus few of the people who might have been prosperous, happy ones were so at this juncture.

Mr. and Mrs. Grant might perhaps be so, but they had started upon a new and untried life, the outcome of which had still to be determined. They were, perhaps, on the way to be happy, but were much more likely to be so when they had grown accustomed to each other than to feel themselves so now.

Horace and Augusta did not deserve unalloyed happiness, nor were they enjoying it.

The elder Miss Selbys missed their sister every day of their lives, nor could they accustom themselves to the withdrawal of all the habits of years. Mr. Grant had taken his wife to introduce her to his relations in Scotland, and Withiel was very dull, for the Hall was again shut up.

The health of the eldest young Courtney again broke down, and he again left England in his yacht, to remain abroad for many months.

None of the Grenfell, or Courtney, or Selby families were very happy. Anxiety pressed upon the hearts of all who were of age sufficient to look gravely upon the developments of this worldly life; while many among them lacked the experience which might allow them to perceive that

these troubles were but permitted as training to a higher one.

Perhaps Mabel and Charles were the happiest of any. The long, uncertain waiting was a trial; but he was working hard for her, and there was much to sweeten the time. They were in the course of their duty, and might hope for its reward.

Augusta and Horace had more to try them, particularly Augusta. She longed for her mother, never having previously realized how much that mother had been to her. She longed to tell her mother her difficulties, and to ask her advice. She was lonely; and, though she despised herself for it, she sadly missed the luxuries of her former life.

She soon acquired the art of being her own ladies'-maid; and this was well, as Nancy found a nice situation for Bayley, who was obliged to accept it, after begging

hard to remain with her dear young lady.

Augusta had principle, however, and knew that their income could never cover such expenses, so Bayley went, with tears and grief, leaving her young mistress unaided.

Augusta possessed a small fortune of her own, independently of her parents. It had been bequeathed to her by an aunt, after whom she had been named; and amounted to about two hundred a year. This, Frank advised his son to settle strictly upon her, if only to prove his disinterestedness; and he, further, caused Horace to insure his life on her behalf. Beyond paying the premiums upon this insurance, he could only make his son a very small allowance, without injustice to his other children. The young man must work hard, and do the rest.

Mr. Selby softened towards the young couple over the necessity of acting for

them in these arrangements. He made no objection to their coming to his house, or to his wife and daughters going to see them. After a while he went yet further.

At first they remained in Buckingham Street, Nancy making terms easy for them, and doing their best for their comfort. But, as they settled down, it did not answer. It was necessary for Horace to be much away from home, attending classes; there was no possibility of having a studio set apart for him in that house, and the light was atrocious. Dorothea had her own studies to attend to; they had already been seriously infringed upon, and Augusta pined in the dulness to which she was so wholly unused.

She was afraid to walk out alone, for her style and appearance caused remark in those streets. She was stared at, and, on one occasion, followed and addressed; after which she never stirred abroad unless

Horace could take her out. This was more and more difficult for him to do as the days became shorter, and she was almost a prisoner in that close and dingy place. Her health became affected again, and Mrs. Selby insisted upon their coming to them for the winter.

Augusta was happier in St. John's Wood. She came to love her mother-in-law dearly, and Mabel as much. Frank made her welcome in his studio, where her husband also worked, and she walked out with the girls or children when all the elders were unavoidedly engaged in other ways.

Her health improved in that better neighbourhood, and in the cheerfulness of the house; and she also learnt something of domestic usefulness under Mrs. Selby's gentle tutelage. But she was sadly in their way. An idle member of any household is always more or less of a burden, and

every member of that household was so busy.

They grew fond of her, and were very kind to her, but she was not in her place, and Mrs. Selby began to fear that the habit of dependence upon them would interfere with her ever acquiring the habits which would ensure her own and her husband's future happiness.

After an anxious consultation, the plan was suggested of the young people going to Rome, where Horace could complete his studies favourably. The climate suited Augusta, and their income would go twice as far there as in London.

Both of them liked the plan, for the perception of being in the way rendered them, after a time, almost as uncomfortable by their presence in St. John's Wood as the family there was incommoded. Augusta begged hard to have Dorothea with her, but her father refused. He

thought that so young a couple should be left to themselves until they learned to depend upon each other, and that the kindest, best-loved friend could only be injurious company until that end was attained.

So, before Christmas arrived, this scheme was acted upon; Horace and Augusta went off to Rome by themselves, her parents not having relented towards her in the least.

It was a relief to all parties, but they did not leave perfect ease or content behind them. We have said that Mabel and Charles were perhaps the happiest of all connected with Tregarthen at this present epoch; yet, if Mabel's happiness were the gauge of that of the rest, their stock would have been but scanty. Virtue, in this naughty world, is *not* its own reward. It rather appears to be wholly unrewarded, more often than not. This is rather an

immoral reflection, even if it be ever so true; but it is not an uncommon one.

Something of exaltation of spirit had carried Mabel over her troubles up to this time, and now reaction set in, and life appeared to her most prosaic. She had, long before, grown quite used again to the ways of her home; her eyes had regained their accustomed focus, and saw the deficiencies in her daily surroundings unheedingly; yet they told on her.

She and Dorothea had greatly improved the drawing-room, now a pretty and tasteful apartment; but, as such, her mother sat in it less, fearing lest the children should break the ornaments, and soil the dainty covers. Mrs. Selby had never been the mistress of such a room before, and admired it heartily; so heartily that she shut it up, and saved it for the grandest occasions. She had not yet grown up to her present prosperity, nor forgotten the

struggle which the possession of any nicety in furniture had cost her.

So the pretty drawing-room was too precious for the use of boys and children, and the air of a parlour seldom occupied clung to it. The common sitting-room remained the shabby, littered dining-room, with its faded red moreen curtains, its patched old carpet, covered with much-worn drugget in the centre, and its washed-out chintz. There was no relief from the noise of children until bed claimed the younger fry, when Mabel was often too tired to exert herself any further.

Dorothea, humbled and saddened, asserted herself no more, but plunged deeply into the study of art, and worked in her father's studio when not at her classes. Her long absence from home had cost her her former niche in it; she would never be quite in touch with it again. But she was more of a companion to her father

than Mabel had ever been, and the father did not need his elder daughter for a model at present; so Dorothea and he discussed pictures and technical points of mutual interest; and Mabel taught the little ones, and darned stockings, and mended small torn garments, and went into the kitchen upon the 'housewife skep,' and felt it all as drudgery, while blaming herself for so feeling it.

Nursery life had been greatly relaxed in Steenie's case, of necessity through his long illness. Through that time he had been constantly amused, and promoted to the companionship of the elders, so that he had now a strong objection to being relegated once more to nurse's discipline. He could not go out of doors through the winter except upon very fine days, for he remained extremely delicate, and the lack of fresh air rendered him a prey to much nervous irritability. It was a difficult

task to strike the balance between the exercise of proper control and unnecessary chafing of his temper.

'Don't make him cry, my dear,' Mrs. Selby would plead, when the boy, who hated arithmetic, stoutly resisted working his sum.

'What is Steenie roaring about?' his father would say, putting his head in at the door. 'There is no bearing this noise.'

Mabel believed that Steenie was quite equal to the simple task, and ought to be made to conquer his dislike to it; but, when the spoilt child found that howling paid, he howled whenever the sum did not work correctly of its own accord, and came off victoriously. Then Amanda followed suit. She did not like needlework, and tried to resist her fate in that direction; but, there, her mother's authority came in, and she gained nothing by sniffing and sobbing over her two inches of hemming.

'It is very hard,' she would fretfully wail. 'You let Steenie off his sums, and won't let me off this horrid sewing.'

Maternal authority was, however, rigid in her case; but her constant fretfulness was not pleasant.

On the other hand, Steenie had learnt to read well, and could amuse himself easily in that way; the difficulty was to supply him with a never-ending stream of entertaining books; and he would toss aside, petulantly, all others. Stories of adventure were his favourites, until one day his brother Walter carelessly remarked,

'What a little duffer you are, Steenie, to be always filling yourself up with the accounts of foreign countries, and fighting, and ships! *You* will never be able to go about the world. Why, you cannot walk across the room without your crutch!'

Walter had no idea that the poor child had never realised this painful fact.

Steenie had always looked upon his illness as an interlude in his life; and believed that, one day, he would be as strong and as active as he used to be.

His piteous dismay, upon hearing his misfortune so roughly declared, was most distressing to witness. There might have been some lurking fear, hidden away in the child's perceptions, that this affliction might befall him. His great delight in books of adventure might have been an instinctive resistance to conviction; but the tenderness with which he had been treated, in avoiding all mention of his infirmities, proved to have been cruel kindness.

'Oh! Duchess! Duchess! Is it so? Must I never go to foreign lands? Am I never to run about or climb trees again, as long as I live? Oh! Duchess, Duchess, why did you not let me die when I was so near it?'

The boy was prostrated by grief. For days he lay, brooding and crying, refusing all comfort. The weather was bad; thick fogs and dismal rain prevailed outside; and his health deteriorated visibly beneath the shock.

'Steenie,' said Mabel at last, 'you may have to go to some foreign place, one day, to grow strong. If you were shipwrecked on the way there you would be of no use as you are now, certainly. But, if you knew as much about animals, and trees, and plants as the father in the Swiss Family Robinson did, you could do as much good as he. Remember how Ernest was always trying to learn; and had to come home to Europe to be taught many things which even his father could not tell him about.'

Steenie sat up on his couch, and his big blue eyes were fixed upon his sister's face with the most earnest attention. She went on:

'It may be that God has sent this illness to you because He wants you to be clever in some other way than in running about. If you were to try and learn things now, while you can do nothing else, you might be able to earn money when you are a man, so that you could go about the world. If you could not go as a sailor or a soldier, you might perhaps go as a traveller, only you must have money to do that.'

Steenie threw himself over upon her lap, hiding his face in his hands upon it. She fondled his curly head as he lay half across her knees, and felt his deep-drawn sobs. At last, after a long silence between them, came a sad little voice, saying,

'Set me a sum, Duchess.'

She set him one, and smoothed all difficulties away, helping and explaining until an easy success crowned his efforts. From that day he resisted no longer, and soon took a pleasure in conquering all

combinations of the nine Arabic figures.

After a few days he suddenly remarked,

'I would like to learn Italian. Gee-gee could speak it, and he was not grown up. He said everybody spoke Italian in the town where people are buried in boats.'

'You shall learn Italian, dear,' said Mabel, 'but you would learn it easier if you learnt some Latin first.'

'Teach me some Latin then,' said he.

This was not so easy a matter; Mabel's acquirements in that direction were inadequate. Mr. Selby engaged a tutor for three hours a week; but this young man taught mechanically, and Steenie wearied of the dull application expected of him, and the study of the dead languages did not proceed very satisfactorily.

Christmas came, bringing Charles Grenfell on a visit, full of resources wherewith to relieve Mabel. He presented Steenie with a beautiful fur pelisse which had

formed part of his own equipments, a few years before, for a winter visit to St. Petersburg. Wrapped in this, and covered with warm rugs, he managed to take the child to the Zoological Gardens for short visits; he even put his wheeled chair into the guard's van, and had him conveyed to South Kensington.

He showed him how necessary Latin is for all purposes of science and natural history. When he returned from visiting his parents at Tregarthen, he brought the boy a great parcel of elementary scientific books, suited to his age, and a student's microscope, with a case of specimens, long forgotten among his own childish treasures. The impetus which these gifts afforded to poor Steenie was wonderful.

'I shall come again at Easter, old man,' was Charles's farewell. 'I shall expect to find, by that time, that you have mastered all the declensions and the regular con-

jugations. Write to me, sometimes, when Mabel is writing, and tell me how you get on.'

Steenie proudly promised to do so; and his resources were mightily increased by this opening before him of hope, and the better understanding of the reasons for drudgery distasteful in itself; but there were still many dull weary days, many ups and downs in the boy's health and spirits, which were a heavy burden to meet, and the weight of which fell chiefly upon his sister.

It was the always talking down to his level which Mabel felt so much; she yearned for equal, for superior companionship herself, for brightness in her own life which seemed wholly to have abandoned her now.

Augusta's letters were a pleasure; but she could not resist a sense of the inequality of fate in bestowing sunshine,

variety, surroundings to suit her tastes upon her erring sister-in-law. Colour, light, life were all hers, when she and Horace had snatched at happiness improperly; whereas toil, dulness, weariness were the portions of Charles and herself who had tried to do their duty.

Here Mabel always checked herself, feeling heartily ashamed of such thoughts; and chiding the selfishness at their root, even though only half conscious of them. Yet they would recur constantly, and wear her out from the struggle to suppress them.

Steenie's new interests did not always prove delightful to those around him. A passion for natural history seized upon him. He must prepare objects for his beloved microscope. He heard that there were different species of fleas which haunted different animals, and he determined to collect all the sorts which he could meet with. He searched the cat's fur, much to

pussy's displeasure, but could not find a flea.

'I should think not, Master Steenie,' quoth nurse. 'I'd let puss know if she did not keep herself cleaner than that, indeed.'

'Pussy is not a she,' remonstrated Steenie, 'it is an old Tom.'

'Tis all one,' replied nurse.

'Will you get me a flea, then, Nursie?' implored he.

'Not if I knows it,' said she.

Steenie went to the housemaid.

'Do, Mary, get me a flea.'

'Why, what could you want with them nasty warmint, Master Steenie?'

'I want to put it in the live box of my microscope, and see what it is like,' said he.

'Well, I never. You couldn't never see it, you know, because I always cracks them up to nothing when I catches them,' said she.

'Oh! please get me a whole one, do, dear Mary. I want a whole one, not cracked, so much.'

Soon afterwards, Mary called Master Steenie mysteriously to her.

'I've got you a flea, dearie, it's all whole and entire, but I've drownded it dead, or nurse will be angry. I put it into the deep wash-hand bason, full of water, and it has been there four blessed hours, so I reckon on it it's dead as mutton by this time.'

'Oh, thank you, Mary,' cried he, stumping away for his little live box.

The flea,—a very fine one, deep red in colour from its night's meal upon somebody's life-blood, and caught while sleeping the sleep of repletion afterwards,—was safely boxed up, and beheld with rapt delight by Steenie, who called to all his friends to admire his treasure. But the troublesome insect would not stay in the middle of the live box. Turn it round as

often as Steenie would, it could only be partially seen at a time, because it would fall away against the edge. Steenie pulled open the lid, to arrange matters more to his satisfaction, and the creature who was not at all dead, in spite of its four hours' immersion, gave a spring,—another hop,—and disappeared, in the most lively manner, among Amanda's garments.

Amanda shrieked with horror; Steenie screamed for his flea; nurse descended upon them in wrath. The flea was recaptured, and its last meal was eaten, for nurse cracked it first, and burnt it afterwards, to prevent it from ever coming back to life any more.

To console him, Mary caught a cricket for him, and Mabel prepared it beautifully upon his setting-board, for a specimen. He was so delighted to observe the saws on its legs, its lovely gauze-like wings with their horny cases, and its horse-like

head, that he next wished a black-beetle to be spread out for him; and brought the kitchen beetle-trap, full of live horror, to Mabel, who, however, struck work at that, much to her brother's disappointment, and drew the line there most rigidly.

St. John's Wood did not afford a great variety of subjects at that time of year; so Steenie's *fureur* for his collection underwent sudden collapse for a time after that, and he hung about listlessly till he found some chemicals in Guy's and Walter's room, which he annexed without due leave asked or granted.

With these he was very happy for a time, until he burnt so many holes in his clothes from the unwary use of acids, that again nurse interfered, and 'They there nasty old messes' were ruthlessly confiscated.

So the winter wore away in St. John's Wood; but, meantime, at Withiel matters

began gradually to settle down, and a kind of grey-hued peace ensued, which might eventually lift, and give place to a brighter day. We will pay a short visit to the old Miss Selbys' cottage, and see how it fared with those worthy ladies.

CHAPTER VII.

TIME AND CHANGE ARE BUSY EVER.

It was a dreary November day. Sleety rain was falling persistently, the sky was full of it, and no likelihood of better weather for some time appeared.

Miss Letitia Selby laid down her book, drew her warm shawl closer around her, and sighed, feeling very dull and lonely.

'Are you in pain, Letty?' asked Miss Selby, who sat opposite to her, knitting.

'Yes, it is such rheumatic weather, I seem able to count all the bones in my body separately,' replied Miss Letitia.

Miss Selby stirred the fire.

'How quiet we seem without Rose or Jane,' said she. 'We seem quite forlorn, alone together.'

'Yes, it is very dull. I wonder if Mrs. Frank would let us have Felicia and Evangeline for their Christmas holidays? That house must be very full, now Horace and Augusta are there.'

'Perhaps they might. The girls would enliven us a little.'

'Yes, it would be something to look forward to.'

'There is the pony-carriage. It is Janey! How wet she is! What a day for her to drive over!'

Miss Jane came in, her colour freshened by wind and rain, her voice cheerful.

'Well, sisters, how dull you look! We must have more chrysanthemums, yellow ones, in the garden next year, and scarlet salvias. They last on so much longer than

other flowers. Rose's garden is gay still with them.'

'How is Rose?'

'Oh, blooming! She wants the regulations for the blanket-lending society; you have them, have you not, Letty? And have you got the old receipt for hunting beef, Elizabeth? Will you look it up? I thought you would be glad to see me in this awful weather, so I came over, but Rose would be glad if I could go back next week, and help her through the Dorcas meeting. Oh, the accounts have fallen into such a dreadful muddle!'

So Miss Jane chatted on, and the cottage was no longer dull.

Mrs. Grant was bustling about her parish, putting all the charities into good train. A baby had arrived to some very poor people. Miss Letitia might make clothes for it. Prizes were wanted for the school-children, could her sisters manu-

facture some very pretty pincushions and things to help? Lady Sarah had a great store of gay pieces of silk which Rose knew she would give to them for the purpose. She had no time to make mince-meat, and her cook had a whitlow on her finger, was it too much to ask Elizabeth to make double quantity, and share with her? She sent the loan of her nice new mincing-machine to ease the work, and a most amusing new book, which Letty could read aloud the while.

Mrs. Grant's marriage had certainly widened her sisters' range of interests, and their periods of dulness were shorter for it. But nothing helped Lady Sarah through the gloom which had fallen upon her life.

Charles went to Dartmoor, with a party of reading-men in the long vacation, meaning to spend Christmas with his parents; but, when December arrived, the countess

made so strong a point of his going to them for the festive season, that all were fain to yield to her.

'He must be lured gently into common sense and worldly wisdom,' said that priestess of mammon. 'We are going to have a very gay house-party, it will be good for him to mix with fashionable people, and feel what he will lose if he persists in allying himself with those beneath him.'

'I daresay it will be good for him,' sighed her ladyship.

'Of course it will, my dear. He would never have met that girl at all if you had not been so foolish as to vegetate at home all the summer before last. Sir Theophilus must see now how absurd his dislike to town has been proved. Between Charles, poor fellow, and that crazy Augusta Courtney with her cantrips, he has made a pretty mess of affairs. Not one iota of

all this would have occurred if he had come up for the season in a sensible way, and then had a nice house-party for the shooting.'

'No, I do not suppose that it would.'

'Well, be sensible now. Let that unhappy boy of yours come to us, see plenty of people, learn his own value. Barlow and Varley seem to be quashing that lawsuit. They are evidently wearying the claimant out by long delays, and I daresay the whole thing will die a natural death in course of time.'

So Charles went to the countess for Christmas, very reluctantly, but even his father had been brought round to think it for his son's advantage. He, never much of a sportsman, and now so sadly depressed in spirits by the constant sense of fatality hanging over him, had not cared to play host to a miscellaneous party of men through the shooting-season this year.

The partridges and pheasants were enjoying a high old time of it, for scarcely any were required even for the use of the family, nor did the baronet care to wander alone about the stubble-field. Tregarthen was no fit place now for a young man in vacation time, he said; Charles had better go to his aunt's house.

Charles did not think so; he would much have preferred spending Christmas either with his father, or in London: but, when even Sir Theophilus urged him to go to his uncle's seat, he felt himself bound to yield, and consented to go for part of the time.

He did not enjoy his visit; he felt out of touch with the frivolity of all the amusements. He enjoyed tramping over the country with the sportsmen; and hunted with a zest which he had never before felt. The earl's seat was in a hunting county, and his cousins mounted him well.

The days were well enough, the outdoor exercise did him good; but the evening pleasures palled sadly upon his taste.

All the girls seemed to him feather-pated, empty-minded, frivolous, flirting. He was out of touch with them; and there was a good deal of high play every night. Even the ladies joined more or less in this; and it disgusted his fastidiousness to observe the look of eager greed upon a pretty, delicate face, and to watch womanhood, of any age, flushed and excited over games of chance.

He did not wish to win other people's money; he could not afford to lose his own: he was glad to cut short his visit, and go to the Selbys for refreshment. He did not there see Mabel's difficulties and depression, for his presence brightened and helped her at the time. It seemed to him that the whole family was

recovering its usual cheerful spirits; and so they were, in part.

Money matters were going well with them; Mrs. Selby's health was stronger; even Steenie, in Charles's opinion, was better than he had yet been since his fever. There seemed to be some hope that, though always likely to remain delicate and lame, he might, in course of time, outgrow some of his ailments, and have a career before him. Charles thought that the boy showed an unusual amount of intelligence and ability for his age, and was delighted to afford him mental food.

While he was there, bright, pleasant letters arrived from the young couple in Rome, accompanied by the first parcel of sketches from Horace. The only drawback to these easy-going young people seemed to be the rigid displeasure of Sir Thomas and Lady Courtney.

These stern parents were in town, and

Charles went to see them, carrying the Roman drawings with him. He laughed on his return.

'I did not say whose sketches they are,' said he, 'and they asked no questions. "H. S." in the corner told no tales. Aunt Di looked at each very attentively, and passed them on in turn to Uncle Tom. He peered at them, through his eye-glasses, in solemn silence, one by one, but said nothing at all. My belief is that the dear old folks are relenting, and only want some good excuse to justify their weakness in their own eyes.'

'I met Sir Thomas in the street one day,' said Mr. Selby, 'and he cut me dead. It was very afflicting, but I survived the shock.'

'Nothing else could be done, you know, sir, as things stand at present. Uncle Tom has involved himself,—nailed his colours to the mast,—he cannot retreat

from his attitude of irate father. If Gussie would only have a cold in her head, it might serve as an excuse—anything would, in my opinion; but the child seems to have taken quite a new lease of life since her marriage.'

Mrs. Selby thought so too; she sent on to Lady Courtney all Augusta's letters as they arrived, in a blank envelope, without any comment beyond 'Mrs. Selby's compliments.' No acknowledgment was ever received, but the letters did not come back.

Charles went back to Oxford all the better for his short visit, and Mr. Selby made a spirited sketch of him during his stay, which was a great treasure to Mabel. Charles carried away with him a companion sketch of Mabel herself. His steady work at college was telling now, and he had hopes of taking a good degree.

But to Lady Sarah life was one long-drawn experience of weary dulness.

How heavily the days dragged themselves along that dreadful winter! Club books lost their relish from lack of any person with whom to discuss them; fancy work palled upon her when she had no one to admire it; the deadly quiet of the house became intolerable, no parish news, no village gossip was now brought to her, few visits were paid to her by the bright-faced little figure of Rose Selby, upon whom she had learnt to depend so much, —more than she had ever realized; who had kept alive her interests in the people about her, and whom she had no one to replace. She began to sink into invalidish ways from sheer want of anything else wherewith to occupy her thoughts.

Sir Theophilus was dull, too, though he did better than his wife, for he had more out-of-door interests to afford him variety. He had the Quarter Sessions to attend, magistrates' meetings, and the committees

of various public charities, on all of which he met with neighbours and friends, and received ideas which gave a refreshing change to his own.

But when he came home to a lonely house, a depressed companion, a silent dinner, and a dreary evening, unenlivened by any society, he thought with regret of his son's cheery voice, and the attentions which Mabel Selby had shown to him when she was there. Her singing of the songs of his youth, her games of cribbage and backgammon, the rubber so frequently played by the four of them, her pleasant chat, even the stamping of little Steenie's crutch, and his quaint remarks, were all remembered with regret.

'I do not know, my dear Sarah,' said he, one miserably snowy day, 'when we were ever so snug and happy as when that Miss Selby was here.'

'Humph!' said Lady Sarah.

'I often wish that we had such a daughter,' pursued the old gentleman.

'And have her run away from us just as she grows useful to us,' remarked his wife, drily.

'Poor Augusta!' sighed he. 'Barlow tells me that her husband's family are very kind to her. Selby is the new R.A. That dear little crippled boy has been the means of discovering that the child whose claim Rosewarne has set up goes by another name now than that which he formerly bore. Barlow hoped to make a great point of this, but has been brought to a check again in his inquiries.'

There was a long silence, broken by a deep sigh from Lady Sarah. Sir Theophilus looked anxiously at her.

'Are you feeling dull, my dear?' asked he.

'Very,' was the laconic reply.

'We miss Rose Selby much,' said he.

'Yes,' said she.

'I suppose—you don't think—it would not be possible——' stammered he.

'What are you hammering upon?' asked his wife, sharply.

'You do not think it would be best to let Charlie take his own way, and have that young lady here for a visit, so as to learn to know her better?'

'Sir Theophilus, you are an idiot!' cried the lady, indignantly. 'What are they to live upon if Charlie makes a fool of himself?'

'True, my dear, true. But they need not be married even if we did give way; and we might have her a good deal here.'

'And let Charlie run away, too?'

'I do not think Charlie would do that. He has too much common sense.'

'He does not show his common sense. Why does he not propose to Miss Spencer?'

'Well, my dear Sarah, after all, Miss Spencer's voice would be a little trying sometimes. Its timbre is not pleasing. I do not know that I could stand it myself if I were in Charlie's place.'

'You are no better than an idiot, Sir Theophilus, as I said before.'

'Well, well, my dear.'

Sir Theophilus walked to the window, and stood watching the large flakes swirl about in the air, obscuring the view, blotting out the sky, casting a pall over all without. He was very heavy-hearted. He would have found it easier to bear the blow which the loss of his estate would prove, had it come at once. Heroism might have then supported him; pluck might have been summoned to his aid; but this dragging on, week after week, month after month, with nothing certain, nothing settled, was wearing him out.

His lawyers still hoped much from de-

lay. They might yet find the clue which they were certain existed; they might tire out the enemy; starve him out; bring his pecuniary resources to an end by forcing upon him constant legal expenses.

There had been an attempt to lay an embargo upon the rents; but the tenants were too loyal to Sir Theophilus, the Rosewarnes too long absent from the neighbourhood for any revenues to come to the enemy by such means. Nevertheless, the baronet's lawyers advised the most rigid economy in every branch of the expenditure; for, should the worst come to the worst, ready money would be cruelly needed, and they were desirous of seeing their own heavy bills met.

So there were no pictures bought, no plate, no books; no additions were made to the hot-houses, no new plans carried out in the gardens; no company was kept, no pleasant society sought 'for the present.'

The place was 'kept up,' and that was all, every superfluity was cut off.

The life led at Tregarthen would have been luxury to many and many another pair; a haven of quiet bliss to thousands of good folks, heart-sick of struggling with fate; but, to those accustomed to lives so much fuller of variety and pleasure, it was deadly stagnation, overshadowed by a never-ending carking fear.

Campbell, the poet, writes of the 'too, too long endurance of absence which afflicts the heart.' Change the word 'absence' for 'suspense,' and the lines form the refrain which haunted this poor lady and gentleman hour by hour, and ate out their happiness. They could not begin any new life, map out any future for themselves, until they knew what that future contained for them. There was nothing for them but patience, and their stock of that virtue was cruelly tried.

So all our friends were passing a most trying winter; some in one way, and some in another, nor did there seem to be much help for it in any direction. Vague dread of the intangible is always the greatest trial of any.

CHAPTER VIII.

ROSEWARNE'S DISAPPEARANCE.

UNTIL he was threatened with the loss of his estate, Sir Theophilus never had estimated the pride and pleasure which he felt in the fine order maintained upon it. He had beforehand believed this to be so complete that he was inclined to regret, like Cæsar, that no more worlds remained to be conquered in respect to it.

Now, he rode, drove, walked about it, seeing not only new beauty in it every day, but improvements which had never suggested themselves to him before. He noticed drainage needed here, planting

there; cottages which wanted renewal, farms that would be improved by new out-buildings; and he could do nothing to forward such work.

Every time when some one among his humble neighbours touched his hat, or bobbed a rustic curtsey to him, he felt a pang to think that he would be their master no longer, and that these upstart, low-born people would not know how to keep a discerning eye upon their welfare.

There had been time for the story to take root in the understandings of the country-folks, and the sudden cessation of all work and improvement upon the estate had convinced the people of the baronet's probable poverty and change of position. He felt the difference in the attitude of some among his tenants and dependants most keenly.

Vulgar good-will loosened the tongues of some among them, and the very men

who would have least dared to address him voluntarily at one time were now free in offering him compassion and advice.

Sir Theophilus very often winced under their outspoken sympathy. Sometimes he planned to take a small house in Truro, Falmouth, or Plymouth, thinking that he and Lady Sarah would be happiest in that part of the world, where they would be known, and where they could still at times look upon the hills and dales, the woods and streams which formed the Paradise from which they were probably so soon to be ejected. At other times he felt that he must fly from all which recalled former happiness, he could endure anything better than that, and Baden, or some more retired foreign place, must be their harbour of refuge.

He discussed no plans of this kind with his wife; she had chilled him, and trouble had set them wider apart rather than

drawn them into closer bonds of affection. He did not understand her, and suffered alone.

Yet did Lady Sarah yearn for sympathy and tenderness which she knew not how to command. The coldness among her lady friends surprised and hurt her even more than Sir Theophilus felt with regard to the liberties taken in offering pity to him. She had always created respect, awe, envy, rather than love, and, in the changed attitude of her female friends, she now became painfully aware of this.

The truth was that many entertained the deepest sympathy for her, the most genuine pity and sorrow, but they did not know what to say or do now in the uncertainty of her position. They were afraid of giving her offence, for she had never allowed intimacy, or entertained any warm feminine attachments, except in the case of Rose Selby, and Rose Grant was

now out of her daily reach, and absorbed in her new duties and growing affection for her husband and step-daughter.

Other ladies would have been willing to offer attentions and comfort, but were afraid of her. They did not know how to make any change in their manners, lest she might resent their doing so as an affront. She was really in that state of soreness of mind which was apt to be offended here at fancied patronage, there at neglect. Some visits she declined to receive.

'They only call from impertinent curiosity,' she said to herself.

Others she vexed herself in secret at not receiving.

'No cards from such, or such? They might have called on me. I was very kind to them at one time,' she thought.

She kept her neighbours at bay, in this manner, by her own fault, but she chafed

and pined in her solitude from whatever cause the neglect arose.

Augusta cried when her affectionate little note was returned to her unread. It had been a great effort to write it, but Mabel Selby had urged her to do so upon hearing of Lady Sarah's loneliness from Charles. Lady Sarah felt that to entertain overtures from her rebel niece would be to strengthen her son's hands, and so she refused all comfort from that source; but no sooner had she rebuffed the young couple, in a manner which afforded no scope for future attempts, than she wished that she had invited them to stay with her, for a time, at least. It would have helped their limited means, and she had always been fond of Augusta in her cold way.

She felt this more after Sir Thomas and Lady Courtney paid a short visit to Tregarthen; when, in a long private confabulation with her sister-in-law, she noticed

how that mother's heart was yearning after her wilful daughter, and only longing for an excuse to give in,—an excuse to which she herself might have paved the way. But she had allowed the chance to pass, and could not see how to bring another about.

She drove her son from her by her lack of sympathy with him, and then chafed to perceive how much more he loved to be with his father than with her. She kept everyone at a distance, and then fretted secretly from the sense that nobody loved her.

So she ate her heart out in lonely grandeur, among unsatisfied longings, and the winter drew to an end.

It was a wild, blustering, bitterly cold day in March, when Sir Theophilus was surprised by a visit from Mr. Barlow.

'I thought, Sir Theophilus, that it would be better for me to run down and

have a talk with you over a strange new aspect which this very extraordinary case has assumed, quite suddenly. Rosewarne and the claimant have both disappeared. The young claimant's sister, a girl about twelve years old, has disappeared also. No one knows where they are, unless it is some new ruse of that old fox, Armitage.'

'Disappeared!'

'Just so. Vanished.'

'Are you sure? How did you hear of it? When did they go?'

'Well, you see that we have had the means of keeping a quiet eye upon Master Rosewarne and his proceedings through his womenkind all along. Selby, the artist, you know, has a woman-servant,—one of those faithful old creatures who make their masters' interests their own. She is devoted to your son,—excuse me, sir, but every link is of value,—she is de-

voted to Mr. Charles Grenfell because of some alleged sentimental relations between him and Miss Selby. She, therefore, is wroth with her old friend Rosewarne for trying to oust him from his inheritance. Rosewarne is a bit of a tyrant in his own house, and as close as wax to his wife and daughter. This has been bad policy on his part, because his lack of confidence has annoyed them,—they complain to Selby's woman, with whom there is an intimacy of long standing; and, not understanding the consequence of stray words, let out what, had they been trusted more, they would have bitten their tongues out rather than betray. It is in this way that we have learnt that young Verdi and his sister, who have been living there, went out one fine day, and never came back. Rosewarne seemed dreadfully annoyed when he heard of this,—he had been out of

town for some hours on the day when it happened. He went to the police about it on his return home, and appears to have run about up and down all day searching for them. At last, in the evening, he went up to the City to see Armitage. We know that he was at his office in Basinghall Street about eight or nine o'clock, and left there meaning to walk home. From that time he has neither been seen nor heard of.'

'Barlow! You astonish me! Something must have happened to him. Have inquiries been made? Does not his wife know anything of him?'

'No, that is how it all came out to us. She is frightened out of her wits,—thinks, like you, that something has happened to him,—goes, in a terrible state of grief, to consult Selby, who naturally comes to us. They went to Armitage, and were told that Rosewarne had gone out of town to bring

back the young people, who had run away out of wickedness, spite, devilry of some kind. But, says the wife, he never did such a thing before without writing, or wiring, or sending some message, and not a word has reached them.'

'I cannot understand it.'

'No, nor anyone else. What put the finishing stroke to Mrs. Rosewarne's uneasiness is that, a few days afterwards, Armitage himself sent up to know whether anything had been heard of the man, thus betraying that he was not in communication with him any more than they.'

'What do you think about this, Barlow?'

'My good sir, I do not know what to think. We have our eyes upon the man who brought the children over from Italy, and who has been much dissatisfied with what Rosewarne had disbursed to him as recompense. We thought that he had got

hold of the young ones from spite, and to wring higher terms from their uncle, but he is about his old haunts, alone, and declaring that he knows nothing of them. We are completely at fault, Sir Theophilus.'

'For how long has Rosewarne been missing?'

'Ten days. The family took it lightly at first. The relief of the children's absence seems to have been immense to the women. They must be regular little imps of darkness, in every imaginable mischief. In their joy at being rid of them, they seem not to have troubled themselves greatly about Rosewarne himself. Since Armitage sent to enquire of his whereabouts, however, the alarm has been steadily growing. You do not think, do you, that the fellow is hanging covertly about here?'

'No, I should have heard of it if he were. It would not be very easy for a stranger to be here, and everyone not to

be aware of the fact. But Sam Rosewarne has relations in the neighbourhood, and so has his wife. He could not be here secretly. Half the good folks about know him more or less.'

'There is a queerish story connected with this disappearance of his, which I hardly like to mention, it seems so foolish. His wife and daughter think much about a dream which the girl had on the night when he was last seen. She declares that she saw him struggling in black water, and woke up, screaming with terror. She looks upon this as a warning that her father was drowned that night.'

'Absurd,' pronounced Sir Theophilus.

'Just so. The girl is a cripple: an ænemic, hysterical, delicate creature, very fond of her father, who has always made a great pet of her. She is his only child; and has been out of one fit into another ever since. People of that class love the

marvellous, and you Cornishmen are all superstitious, or bear the reputation of being so. She and her mother believe in this dream; but the river-police, whom I thought it worth while to consult, have heard nothing of any man being drowned that night. There was a dense fog that night, certainly, and light snow fell later, off and on. It was so thick and murky when he left Basinghall Street that the first idea was that he might have been knocked down and run over in crossing some street. As to his being drowned, there was no reason why he should have been near to the river. In all reasonable probability, he would have taken the nearest way home in such weather, if he had not gone in an omnibus. Selby, who is inclined to put more faith in the dream than I do, by the way, went to all the principal hospitals, and enquired at Scotland Yard, but no such case has been reported. The whole thing is a mystery.'

'It is very strange,' said Sir Theophilus.

'You may laugh at us Cornishmen for superstition if you like, Barlow, but it is not only among our people that well authenticated accounts of persons being warned in dreams occur. There is Scriptural authority for such things, you know. Still, it is a rare occurrence, certainly, and one can never say. That girl is an hysterical maid, I know.'

'Well, time will prove.'

'Yes, time will prove. I dare say that the man will turn up again, like a bad penny.'

'He may. Meantime, this brings our case to the most provoking deadlock. Rosewarne holds the clue to the whole plot. He has never entrusted anyone with it, unless he has confided in Armitage, who, of course, says nothing. Without the plaintiff, without the claimant, without the witnesses, I do not see how a settlement is ever to be arrived at.'

The two gentlemen looked at each other in the most complete bewilderment.

CHAPTER IX.

THE YOUNGEST MISS SELBY.

Horace and Augusta Selby went, as has been said, to Rome; but, carrying with them all their inexperience of the world, found their attempt at residence there a great disappointment at first.

The Courtneys had been there for the carnival and Easter festivities two years before; and certain fashionable English residents had by no means forgotten the pretty Miss Courtney, or the pleasant establishment kept up by her agreeable mother.

The name of Selby was a passport to

other resident circles; the story of the young people's romantic marriage had preceded them, and the good looks, evident talent, and lively spirits of the gentleman exonerated the bride in the eyes of her acquaintances as rapidly as her grace and charm acquitted him in the opinions of the artistic clique.

Invitations flowed in upon them thick and fast. The first ones were for simple unconventional parties among artists; and Horace was very proud to show his young wife, in her elegance of white, lace-trimmed, trailing dress, decorated with roses. He did not see a woman, old or young, English or foreign, to compare with her, and told her so with exultation.

'Do you care for my prettiness so much, you silly boy?' asked she, laying her soft cheek against his, with a loving gesture all her own, and inexpressibly winning.

'Vain little woman, you know that

I do,' said he, fondly stroking her face.

'I am not a little woman,' reproved she, drawing herself up. 'I am tall. You have no idea how long my skirts have to be, and how much more lace it takes to drape them than Louisa's.'

All this was very well; but soon cards for 'at homes' arrived from very exalted personages, and Augusta knew what was necessary for such festivities better than Horace.

'What shall I do?' asked she. 'I have not a thing fit to wear if we go to the marchese's ball. I must have a new frock for it.'

'My dear, you have heaps of frocks,' said ignorant Horace.

'Oh, Horace!' cried she, opening reproachful eyes, 'why, I have not had one since we were married! Everybody will be *beautifully* dressed there, and all my things are last year's fashions.'

'Well, dear, if it must be, it must. I suppose that new frocks are a necessity some time or other. You have been very good about expenses, and I suppose gowns do not cost a very great deal.'

'Oh, no, it need be nothing but what is quite simple, and I can make some of my own lace do. I will have good material, because it wears so much better, and looks well to the last rag. Fortunately everything is trimmed with pearls now, and I have some very nice ones, only I must have a little alteration made in some of the things to fit them for what I shall want.'

'Your taste always is lovely, darling. Do what you like, only make a point of paying ready money. We are too poor to stand bills.'

'Yes, dear, I always have done so, you know; but, Horace dear, you ought to have a new dress-suit, too. Yours is so very old-fashioned.'

But here Horace was firm. The expense of a new dress-suit was wholly unnecessary. If people did not like to see him in an old one, he would stay away.

'Stay away! Let me go without you! Oh! Horace, how could you think of it!'

'I don't think of it, until you pronounce it a case of needs must. Everybody knows that I am a poor man; or, if they don't, the sooner they realize that fact the better for us all. It is very different for you. You are the monied partner in this firm, ma'am; and these are your own old friends.'

Augusta had to submit, and comforted herself in the determination to be very economical. She was so according to her own lights; and displayed herself with great anxiety to her husband before they started, to make sure that he liked the effect.

Horace could not contain his delight at the lovely vision before him. The long sweeping gown of rich white satin was perfectly plain in its soft shimmering gloss, but was abundantly draped about the bodice with festoons of lace, caught here and there with dainty sprays of pearls. A pearl comb confined the beautiful hair, and no other ornament of any kind was worn. Even Augusta's long, white throat and round arms rose from billows of delicate lace wholly unadorned; but their exquisite contour could well bear the trial.

'My dearest, you are perfect!' he cried, enraptured.

'It took every pearl I have got,' cried she, in delight at his admiration. 'See, here is my necklace, and these are my bracelets. The comb is made out of three brooches and an odd spray. The jeweller said that it would not be large enough,

and wanted to add some more, but I was resolute. "Not a seed pearl, even," I said, sternly; and it *is* quite big enough, is it not?' turning her head for Horace to judge. 'And my dress!' continued she, with a happy little laugh. 'It is actually lined with two old white silk gowns! There is economy for you!'

Her triumph was pretty to see, and Horace admired and praised, and exulted with her.

A few days after the bills came in, according to request, from milliner and jeweller. Twenty pounds for the dress! Ten for re-accommodating the trinkets! His face fell. Thirty pounds for one dress, only fit for one evening! Was *this* his wife's economy? Augusta perceived his dismay, and cried till she was ill. She had thought herself so clever.

It was plain that visiting would not suit their purse. The jeweller took some other

ornaments belonging to Augusta in payment of his account. She would not part with her pearls there, because her elegance had attracted so much admiration, and been so much commented upon in the newspapers, that she feared they might be recognised; but she sold a diamond ring for enough to cover both bills, and brought them receipted to Horace, with a penitent face.

It stung him with keen mortification to think what she had done.

'It was Charlie's birthday present to you when you were twenty-one,' said he.

'Yes, but dear Charlie would rather I did this with it than run you into debt,' said she. 'I know he would say so. And now, Horace, we cannot afford to visit here, that is plain. Can't we find some nice country place, where we might be very happy together until you have made a great, great deal of money with your

pictures? I don't want to visit, indeed I don't. I was horribly tired after the marchese's ball, and yet I did not dance. I would really like to go away all by ourselves till I am strong again. We can put it upon my health, if you like, and nobody will take offence. Everybody knows that I am not strong.'

It was an excellent idea, and they acted upon it. After some inquiry, they heard of a villa on the slopes of the Alban hills, not far from Frascati, sufficiently elevated above the Campagna to avoid the miasma, and where the pure mountain air would brace Augusta's fragile constitution.

It was a very lovely spot, though much neglected. Its owner had been drowned by the upsetting of a boat, many years before; and, leaving no direct heir, the place had been deserted ever since. It belonged to a wealthy man, who preferred residing upon other estates; for this one

was small, and too secluded to suit as a residence people who led gay lives in Rome, or visitors to that city. It was yet near enough for Horace to go in and out, attending his classes, and returning later in the day. He purchased a queer little light carriage to use for this purpose, and Augusta declared herself perfectly happy when left alone for a few hours each forenoon; she had a great deal to do, she declared, and never missed him. She was determined to learn to be a useful wife; quite a domestic character.

The interior of the villa was bare, and there was indeed a need of many ingenious contrivances to turn it into a comfortable English home; but Augusta had not been so much with Mabel and Dorothea Selby without learning something, and put herself to the task with goodwill.

The outside was all that heart could wish—it was as picturesque and beau-

tiful as even she could desire. A loggia ran along the front of the villa, overgrown with vines and Banksia roses. A flight of mossy old steps ran downwards from this to a terraced garden, where stood a marble fountain, stained and discoloured by time, until it was a thing to delight the eye of a painter; and, further, fringed thickly with maidenhair fern, tossing a silvery stream of water into a broken shell-shaped base, upheld by a sculptured Naiad, whence it overflowed into its wide basin. The ancient stone walls, surmounted here and there by marble vases and broken statues, were lovely bits of colour, their grey slabs diversified by orange and brown mosses, festoons of creeping plants, and the delicate green of the maidenhair pushing out of every crevice. Here they were overrun by orange and lemon trees, all fragrant with snowy flowers or golden with fruit;

there they lay open to the sun, and little green lizards basked on their low coping stones.

At a little distance, a grove of olive-trees cast their pale shadow down the hill side, and a vineyard stretched up the sunny slopes. A kitchen garden, like a carpet of varied hues as one looked down upon its beds of many-tinted vegetables, lay to the windward, and far away, beneath the feet, rolled the mysterious Campagna, varying in beauty with every hour of the day. Now faint lilac mistiness floated athwart it, deepening into violet, and shrouding ruin and tomb as in a dream; then the plain lay blazing in the sun, scarlet with poppies, among which the ox-eyed daisy bloomed in long silver streaks. Then the sun dropped low in the purple sky, and painted it with the most gorgeous hues of crimson and gold, as it sank into the tender, distant haze,

whence the dome of St. Peter's emerged in solemn stateliness; and then the stars came out in myriad clusters, and the 'white, fire-laden' moon walked in her purity across the heavens.

Horace painted morning, noon, and night here, making great progress in his art. He entered himself as a member of the artists' society, studied under one of its chief teachers, and really worked hard. Marriage, and all the difficulties which so rash and imprudent a connection had brought upon him, had called out the best side of his character, and made a man of him. He was of an affectionate disposition, and now repented bitterly of having been the cause of so much deprivation to his beloved Augusta.

The better she bore the change, the more keenly he felt it, and he also regretted the embarrassments which his conduct entailed upon his parents and

sisters. He perceived that it behoved him to work to the fullest extent of his powers, so as to relieve his father as soon as possible, and he did his best.

That best, however, only covered their expenses, and did that with a tight fit; there was not a penny to save, and what was his secret dismay when Augusta told him that a child would be born to them before long. She was enraptured. It was the one thing needed to crown their happiness.

'Dear Horace,' cried she, 'a child of our very own! A sweet little baby! Are you not delighted?'

'Yes, my precious, I am. But, my pretty one, do you know what ought to be put ready for it? Babies require a lot of things, you know.'

'Silly boy! How should I know? But I am not going to send to a shop, and have all that is proper sent to me. I know

better than that *now*. It would be a worse matter than my frock for the marchese's ball! No, I am going to be very prudent. Your mother must know what ought to be had, and I am going to write to her to get it all for me, and send it here. Is not that a wise plan? And look here! All babies wear frocks, you know, and I mean the very first one which ours wears to be all my own work! You never guessed what this was when you saw me embroidering, did you now? I have been working at it for a very long time.'

And she held up to him a most elaborate scrap of needle-work, destined to be the breast-plate of a frock body if it ever were finished, which, at the then rate of progress, might be in three or four years, with good luck.

'God bless you, my darling!' said he, tenderly. 'Write to mother at once. I ought to have thought of this, but it never

occurred to me. It seems but a few weeks since we were married.'

'Does it not! And yet it is a whole year! I have never been so strong and well for ever so long, or so happy. Never so happy in all my life, Horace dear.'

His heart swelled with emotion as he pressed his lips upon the head laid so confidingly upon his breast: and fervent was the prayer which he offered up for his sweet young wife and promised child. It was almost the first real prayer which he had ever uttered.

'Have you known about this for so long?' it at last occurred to him to ask.

'Well, not known very long. I suspected it sometimes, but I was never quite sure, and I waited to tell you until I was quite. Zia spoke to me, and told me that I ought to have things ready, and so I determined to write to your mother.'

'Write at once, my love,' said he.

Augusta did write, but it might have been better had she done so some time before, neither she nor her husband being much wiser than a couple of children in such matters.

Augusta, never a ready correspondent, delayed writing, and, soon after the letter had gone to London, Zia, the cook factotum, met Horace on his return from Rome, smiling from ear to ear, with the information that a little daughter had been born to him during his absence; born rather prematurely.

'A daughter!' cried he. 'I left Mrs. Selby perfectly well.'

'Si, signor. But you were hardly out of sight when the signora called me, and said she was suffering. We wanted to send after you, but she said, "Wait, don't make him anxious." And in two hours it was all right, and the prettiest little créatura ever seen arrived, just

like her pretty mamma, only very small.'

'Are both going on well?' asked Horace, fearfully.

'But yes. No better could be wished. The créatura is small, very small, but charming. It will live with care, the signor need not fear.'

At that moment the feeble cry of the infant was heard, stirring the young man to his very heart's depths, and he hurried to his wife's room.

Horace thought it his duty to write again, upon this event, to Sir Thomas Courtney, but wrote briefly.

'Augusta has presented me with a little daughter,' he said. 'It has arrived rather before we looked for such an event. Her servants have found people in the village to attend to her; they are all very kind, and both mother and child are said to be going on well.'

Lady Courtney sobbed as she read this curt notice.

'Oh, Thomas!' she exclaimed. 'Our poor girl, so delicate, so tenderly reared, left to the mercies of an Italian village nurse at such a time! What will become of her? What will she do?'

And she wrung her hands in helpless dismay.

'Did you know that such an event was impending?' asked her husband.

'I never dreamt of it,' replied the mother. 'Of course it was very foolish of me not to have thought of it, but the other two girls have had none, though married so much longer, and it seems only the other day since the poor dear was a girl at home, acting her tableaux! And now, actually a mother herself! And our first grandchild, Thomas!'

This was the case. The elder sisters, so prosperously married, so well-settled in

life, to whom heirs were of so much importance, so anxiously looked for, had neither of them ever had the chance of one; and this same Augusta, so long looked upon as a child, a pet, as upon the verge of a decline, and obliged to be humoured in every way to save her life; Augusta, married to a man without a penny of fortune, struggling with actual poverty, away from them all, was a mother before any of them had even thought of asking whether there were any prospect of such a thing!

Lady Courtney forgot all her spoilt child's misdemeanours, all her indignation at her romantic marriage, in fears for her health now.

She was sure that she could not be properly taken care of in such a place; among contadini and Italian servants. She was sure that the baby would die; that Augusta would never live, unless she were there to superintend.

In the midst of her agitation, a note reached her from Mrs. Selby, enclosing two letters from Frascati; for, by some unlucky chance, Augusta's had been delayed again in its transit, and reached St. John's Wood at the same time as one from Horace announcing that his little daughter had arrived.

Mrs. Selby wrote, explaining this:

'I think that you may like to see the enclosed from our son regarding the birth of his little girl. We regret very much that his wife should have miscalculated the date at which it was likely to happen, and that her letter, by some misadventure, did not reach me until to-day, so that the articles for which she wished are not yet procured. I am sending off a parcel of my own baby-clothes at once, as they will serve for immediate use until new ones can be procured.'

Horace wrote as follows:

'Dear Pater,

'I wish that you and mother were here, for you are used to these things, and I am tearing my hair in perplexity. Augusta, poor dear, was confined of a daughter this morning, taking us all by surprise; we did not expect it for some weeks. Some old hag was fetched from the village, who seems to understand all about it, and she says that everything is going on well. The servants are very attentive, Augusta says, and she pronounces herself to be as comfortable as she can be.

'It is a jolly little maid, small, but fat; does not cry much, and is the colour of a boiled lobster. The learned say that this is a sign that she will be fair after a time. I daresay mother knows. If so, I suppose she takes after us.

'I trust that all is going on as it should, but they keep me out of Augusta's room,

and she looks as white as paper, though prettier than ever, poor darling!

'I hope that mother has sent off the bibs and things, for Augusta had only a bit of lace ready, just the size of the top of a teacup. The new Miss Selby is bigger than that, after all, bless her, and it don't cover her.'

'Oh, Thomas!' cried Lady Courtney, dropping the letter in a flood of tears. 'Oh, Thomas! My poor girl!'

'She certainly has behaved very ill,' said Sir Thomas, clearing his throat, and walking up and down the apartment. 'Very ill, and so has the young man. But there—I suppose, after all, that they were very fond of each other, and it cannot be undone now.'

'Oh!' sighed her ladyship, 'if I could only get to her!'

'Would you like to go?' asked Sir

Thomas, willing to put his own longings upon the shoulders of his wife.

'Go!' almost shrieked she. 'Go! Do you mean that I may go? Oh, Thomas!'

'I do not see any great reason why we should not go, if you wish it so much,' said he, benignly.

'Oh! yes, yes, I do, I do!' cried she, in rapture.

'Well, send your maid out to the nearest shop, and have what Augusta wants sent in at once,' said he. 'I will write and stop Mrs. Selby from ordering more. We may as well take the things with us.'

In the greatest excitement, Lady Courtney sent for her daughters on the spot, showed them the letters, and bade them put off all her engagements for her. Her maid and Sir Thomas's man were run off their feet by the hurry of their preparations, and their master and mistress, once having given loose rein to their affections,

could neither eat nor sleep until they were ready to set off.

Frank Selby came, laughing, into his wife's parlour, with an open note in his hand.

'Wonders will never cease, wifie,' cried he. 'What *do* you think is the last news out? Sir Thomas and Lady Courtney have started off by this time to dry-nurse Augusta's baby!'

'Poor Augusta!' exclaimed Mrs. Selby.

CHAPTER X.

THE CHRISTENING.

'Poor Augusta!' Mrs. Selby had exclaimed, but it was not a poor Augusta at all who lay recovering with unexampled rapidity in that secluded Italian village. The cup of her happiness was filled almost to the brim.

It is probable that she might not have done nearly so well in London, with a fine fashionable nurse; with mother and sisters and friends to buzz about her; with a busy London doctor to look hurriedly in upon her, longing to be detained as short

a time as possible, so pressing was the number of other cases awaiting him; with every luxury about her, and not a breath of fresh, wholesome air allowed to reach her.

She was nursed exactly as if she had been an Italian village girl, but with the greatest kindness and devotion. It was a most exciting and delightful occurrence to the country gossips. Such a thing had never happened before, in all their experiences, and their womanly hearts were keen to take every care of the sweet young English girl; so grateful for every attention, and so far away from all her friends. Their pride was at stake that she should do well, nor suffer from any fault of theirs.

So, there she lay, with her child beside her, pale, languid, but happy; listening dreamily to the feminine voices babbling, about her, but understanding very little of the patois in which the women conversed.

Old Zia had lived with English people before, and could speak the language a little. Between her English and Augusta's Italian they managed to understand each other fairly well; but the contadini and the lady could do little in the way of intercourse beyond smiling amiably upon each other and using friendly gestures.

Augusta had plenty of time for thought, and the arrival of her child turned those thoughts towards her own mother. This was the first grandchild in the family; how happy her mother would have been had she been there to welcome it! Poor mamma! How scurvily had she repaid her and dear papa for all their goodness to her! How loving, how generous, how unselfish had not their love for her been, and how had she treated them! How little had she considered them!

She could not bear to think that this little treasure of hers, so fresh from God

now, could ever grow up to behave in like manner to her. She wondered that her conduct had never struck her in this light before.

She longed for her mother's embrace; for her father's pardon; and tears coursed down her cheeks as she thought how justly they had been offended. Would they ever forgive her? She thought that they must know of her baby's arrival, but no message had been sent, no notice taken.

The Selbys had written lovingly, but not a word had been received from her own parents. She held Mrs. Selby's letter, received that day, in her hand as she mournfully reflected that she did not deserve to hear from them. Would her mother receive and accept her written contrition? How could she write it? What words could explain the mixture of feelings which overpowered her?

Well, well! At present writing was

quite impossible, she must recover first.

Zia entered the room; her household avocations were completed for the day, and she came to sit with La Signora, while the regular nurse took a little rest.

'E la créatura, la bellina, come sta?' asked she. 'Ah! quant' è gentile, la carina!'

'Baby is asleep,' said Augusta. 'Put her into her berceaunette, Zia, please; it will be cooler for her there than here with me.'

Zia obeyed, and covered the little cradle lightly.

'Ah,' she said—we must render her broken English into more intelligible language,—'Ah! I never saw a little English signorina so young before but once; and then—may the omen be averted—the sweet one was dead.'

'Dead?' asked Augusta, 'here?'

'Yes, here. She lay in her little cradle, like a waxen image, dressed all in white;

and white flowers were heaped around her, and she held a lily of the saints in her tiny hand. The blessed one! We all came to look on her, and to pray the Madonna to keep her;—all but her own mother, may an apoplexy seize upon her, as doubtless it did.'

'Why, where was her mother, poor child?' said Augusta.

'She had left her husband and gone away with a traditore, may the fiend have his soul.'

'How terrible!' cried the happy young mother. 'How could she? What became of her?'

'No one ever heard of her again. She was English, you see, and people are strange folk there, I believe. Credit me she was no Italian! She was contadina, and a great English milor had married her, for she was of a bellezza——ah, quan' bella! But she had a demon of a spirit,

and was angry that he was poor, and could not give her jewels and braveries such as she wanted. His father was displeased with the marriage, and sent him no money, so they came here, and lived close; but the milor said it was but for a time; and that, if she had a man-child, his father would be pleased, and all would be right. But when the little one was born, it was a girl, and the mother would not look at it. Ah! she had no bowels that woman!'

'What a creature she must have been!' cried Augusta. 'And the poor little baby died?'

'Yes, it only lived two months. Ah! it was fair and pretty as a Christ-child; but it was well for it that Our Lady took it, for the milor went on a journey to Florence, and while he was away the maladetta fled with his friend, and left the baby alone. It cried and cried, and then had a fit, and

died; but good Father Anselmo came and baptized it, and fortified it with the holy oil, and no doubt the blessed Mother took its soul to herself. Ah, well! I remember it as if it were but yesterday. I was young then, you see, and was hired to wait upon the signora, and I laid the little one in the coffin myself.'

'And what became of the poor father?' asked Augusta.

'He came back to find his hearth cold and his house empty. He was like a madman, for she was deceitful, and he had always believed that she loved him, though her temper was bad. He went after them, and fought the duello with the man whose hand he had clasped in friendship many and many a time, but who was planning to take from him his heart's dearest all the while. They fought, and the false one killed the milor. They brought back his dead corpse—ah! it was

the corpse of a goodly man, and they buried it in the chapel of the little convent up there among the hills. The traitor was rich, and paid a great sum of money for the tomb, and for masses to be said for his victim, and to cleanse his own soul of the sin. But the saints avenged themselves, after all, for he went away to Naples, and was sailing in a boat on the bay, when a storm swept suddenly over the water and wrecked the boat, and he was drowned.'

'And the wretched woman, what of her?' said Augusta, shuddering, for the old peasant woman told the sad story with native eloquence which impressed her greatly.

'We never heard of her any more,' said Zia. 'Her brother came and tried to find her, but he could not. He took the villa, and lived here for a long time, hoping that she would come back, but she never did;

and at last he spent all his money, and went to Rome, where he took service with some people who came to visit there, and went away with them. We never heard of either of them again.'

'Give me the créatura, Zia,' said Augusta. 'I want to hold her myself.'

She took the babe in her arms, and caressed her tenderly. A tear fell upon the child as she did so, at thought of the hapless baby who had been the only other English little one whom Zia had ever known so young, lying there, with her murdered father, betrayed by her who should have been devoted to both beyond any other. She clasped her treasure the more closely at the thought.

'What was the English milor called, Zia?' asked she.

'I do not know, but there is a name there in the convent chapel,' said Zia. 'Il signor Piombo sent money to have the

milor properly interred, but he never came to see what was done, and Father Anselmo said it was enough to bury the father and child both, and pay for their masses too, so he would not defraud the dead, which never brings a blessing. But though he put up their names in Sienna marble there in the chapel, no one has ever come to see it, no one has cared.'

Augusta determined to go and see this grave of her baby's countrywoman, when she was strong enough to go so far; and lay silently musing over Zia's story, with her sleeping child on her bosom, while the old woman dozed by her side.

She told Horace of this story when he returned; it took strong possession of her imagination.

'We will go together to see that poor Englishman's tomb, as soon as I can,' said she.

Horace wished to turn her thoughts.

He knew that she fretted over her parents' silence, and did not think it good for her, at present, to have any further depression.

'Augusta,' said he, 'I have sold a copy, and received the order for a pair to it. I am unexpectedly flush of money, all at once; don't you think that we had better have baby baptized, without waiting for you to be quite recovered? And, as the people have behaved so well here, we might give them a *festa*, in honour of the occasion?'

'Oh, Horace!' cried she, quite brightening up at thought of any picturesque festivity, 'what an excellent idea! The village people deserve to have their kindness to me recognised: and it would take away the idea that our baby is, in any way, at all like that other poor little thing.'

'Well, let us make arrangements to have it next Tuesday or Wednesday. Baby will be a fortnight old, and it is

time that such an old lady should have a name. You are doing so grandly that, by that time, I should think I might wrap you up, and carry you out upon the loggia, so that you could see the fun.'

'I am to sit up on Sunday for a little while,' said she. 'The doctor said I might to-day, when he was here. He said that I was making a splendid recovery.'

'Well done! But what shall the creature be called? Augusta, after her mamma?'

'Would you mind very much if we called her Diana, after my mother?' said Augusta, timidly. 'I have been thinking so much of poor mamma ever since baby was born.'

'A capital idea, my pet. We will call her Queenie, and she shall "state in wonted manner keep," on the very first day when she owns the name. It is a very pretty name, too.'

They went on planning thus, very hap-

pily, and the notice of the *festa* was given out next day. It was received with rapture, and the English signor and signora were raised at once to the height of popularity.

It was a strange christening party. The Selbys had no English church nearer than Rome, but the child was a strong and hearty one. Mariuccia, its young nurse, wrapped it up well, and Horace drove them, in what he called the 'shander-a-dan,' into the city, where he had found friends to stand godfather and godmother to the little one.

Mariuccia was delighted to enact 'comare' in this fashion, and was anticipating the evening festivities with eagerness. She stood, leaning against the trellis before her, arrayed in Sunday best: a handsome girl, with black eyebrows, as straight as if they had been ruled across her brow; blue-black hair, rolled away beneath her

snowy linen 'tovaglia,' or head-dress; and her magnificent shoulders covered with an orange-coloured kerchief, loosely knotted.

Augusta had looked out, from among her own trinkets, a handsome string of coral beads, with which she had presented her, in honour of the occasion, and she toyed with these in her sun-browned hands, twisting them this way and that with great admiration, her white teeth gleaming with smiles at the gift.

The 'gampina,' or elder woman, who had been high-priestess through the young mother's illness, was Mariuccia's grandmother, and sat on the steps, looking up, and exulting in the pretty finery almost as much as the girl. Both were related by near family ties to Zia; who, with the most reprehensible nepotism, had carefully kept, among all her own relations, the whole of the emoluments likely to be reaped from this unlooked-for windfall.

But, indeed, the whole village was bound together by nearer or more distant kinship; it would have been difficult for the prudent creature to have gone beyond her connections.

All were mightily pleased with the liberality shown to them. Horace, in his ignorance of how far English money would go in so unsophisticated a place, had been lavish beyond expectation; and the *festa* was to be a most brilliant climax. Even now was the gaiety proceeding around the village inn; the centre of the revels.

Augusta, reclining in her long low chair on the loggia, could watch the proceedings, even if she could not smell the savoury odour of the 'fritti misti,' which were wafted to her, ever and anon, among the sweeter and spicier scents of the garden.

Guitars were thrumming, voices singing, tambourines and castanets clicking and

beating, as the saltarello was danced unweariedly by one set of contadini after another, always beginning, never ending. Horace, palette and brushes in hand, sat by her side, and sketched the various groups.

'Go, Mariuccia, and dance too,' said Augusta, 'I want you to enjoy yourself with all the rest. The padrone is here to look after me, and Zia will come soon.'

Nothing loath, the girl clasped her beads around her throat, tripped away, and soon was one of the gayest in the gay throng. But Zia did not come soon. Her dancing days were over—that was very true—yet was she enjoying herself mightily. From the 'fritti' to the 'pinocchiati' and roasted chestnuts, she was tasting of every dish, and washing each down with good red wine. She was in no hurry to leave such delights.

The revel proceeded faster and more

furiously as the evening gathered; but mists began to sweep over the Campagna, the sunset glories faded, the larks ceased their song, the nightingales took up the hymn of praise, the cicala's chirping ceased in the grass, and the glow-worms' emerald lamps began to star the shady corners. Horace put up his sketch-book, and stretched himself.

'Young woman,' he said, 'I shall carry you in, or you and your doll will catch cold.'

'I am ready, dear,' she replied.

He began to bundle up all her cushions, shawls, and wraps, when the music suddenly ceased, and voices were heard in excitement.

'Ah!' said he, 'something has happened. What can it be?'

Augusta had lifted herself up from her reclining position, and now stood beside her husband, bending over the terrace wall, and looking in the direction of the

village inn, beyond which the road from Rome wound among the hills.

A carriage with four horses had stopped there, the animals covered with foam, and panting with the speed at which they had been driven. A gentleman's head protruded; he was evidently asking the way, for a score of hands pointed, a score of voices cried out at once,

'Ecco la signora! Ecco il padrone, e la créatura!' they screamed, on seeing their heads appear.

Augusta looked at the gentleman, and gave a cry. Grey whiskers, grey hair appeared beneath a travelling-cap, a grey moustache upon a high-bred face. It was her own father! Beyond him might be seen a little old lady, still rosy and pretty, with soft white curls, muffled up in black lace and silk—her mother, her dear, dear mother!

She nearly dropped the baby, she threw it into Horace's arms.

'Take it, take it!' she exclaimed.

Everything else was wildly cast aside as she rushed towards her parents. She had never loved them half so well before.

'Papa! mamma!' sobbed she, trying to hug them both at once, 'have you come to me? Have you really come to me? Oh, how good of you!'

'My dear child, my dear girl,' exclaimed Sir Thomas, embracing her.

He doubtless would have proceeded to say something remarkably sensible, when Lady Courtney, catching sight of the baby in its father's arms as he advanced with embarrassment unwonted in him, was overtaken with horror on the spot.

'What!' groaned she, 'what! Swaddled! My poor, poor Augusta! What you must have gone through!'

This seemed to be the realization of her worst fears.

'It is well that I came,' gasped she.

CHAPTER XI.

A SENSE OF MYSTERY THE SPIRIT DAUNTED.

ROSEWARNE had vanished. Nothing could be heard of him; the Italian children had also vanished;—nothing could be heard of them. Were they together? Was this some ruse of Sam's?

Day after day passed, and the mystery deepened. It was difficult for some people not to hold the opinion that they were together, somewhere in hiding. There were a few sturdy disbelievers in this theory, however. First and foremost among these were his wife and daughter. Sam was a good husband, a fond father; he

would never have left his home, and given cause for unnecessary anxiety in this manner. They kept fast to Tamson's dream;—in their estimation, a warning;—and they mourned for him as dead.

Mr. Armitage also discountenanced the idea of hiding. He knew nothing of such a scheme, nor did he see anything to be gained by it.

Rosewarne had really gone to Watford, on the day of the children's loss. He had gone on business connected with ale used in his public-house; and had certainly returned directly, from thence, to his own abode, where he found the young ones gone. His consternation upon learning this seemed to be genuine enough, nor was his perplexity less.

He had wired to his lawyer immediately, to set him to work upon their trace, and had gone up to the city late in the evening to consult with him upon what

measures should be adopted to recover them.

Tiresome, troublesome, mischievous, bad as Tommaso and Carlotta always were, they had beaten the record of their sins on that day.

Taking advantage of Sam's absence, the boy had got at the drink again, and swallowed enough to render him audacious, abusive, foul-tongued in the extreme. Carlotta tied a string across the doorway of the bar; and a customer had tripped over this, and fallen headlong, to the intense delight of both children, and the wrath of the victim.

A perfect chorus of swearing, on both sides, arose, and the barman took the boy by the arm, and swung him into the back premises, daring him to show his face again in his quarters.

It was washing-day. Tommaso, giddy with the violence used towards him, and the drink which he had imbibed, fell into

a tub of hot water, splashed the soap-suds all over the place, had to have all his clothes changed, and then was sick upon a pile of clean linen, just wrung out from the rinsing water.

Carlotta laughed at this disaster till she cried; her brother tried to box her ears for her mockery, and she pelted him with all she could lay hands on.

At the end of all her patience, Mrs. Rosewarne opened the back-door, turned them out into the mews, and bolted the door against their return. They had kicked and stormed at it for a time; but, no notice being taken of them, one of the two had thrown a stone against the window, broken a pane, and the missile narrowly escaped striking Thomasine, as she sat inside, sewing. Screaming with impish glee, both had then run away as fast as their feet could carry them.

Mrs. Rosewarne, relieved by their ab-

sence, proceeded with her washing, much of which had to be done all over again; and it was not till everything was cleared up tidily, and she began to make a comfortable meal ready in preparation for her husband's return, that she wondered what had become of them.

She never troubled herself about dinner upon a washing-day; but hunger generally brought them in, clamorous for something to eat, long before that hour.

Sam came home, however, and they had not appeared, nor were they seen any more. Hearing of Tommaso's half-drunken condition, the first idea was that he had fallen into the hands of the police. He was not unprovided with money, and might have got more liquor, and become quite incapable. Sam went off to the police-court; but nothing was known of them there. He sought among all the public-houses in the neighbourhood; but no

children answering to their descriptions had been in any of them.

Two other surmises were offered. The children might have been kidnapped by Grenfell myrmidons; or they might have been recaptured by Baldino, their former master.

Late as it was by that time, Sam Rosewarne had set off to consult Mr. Armitage upon this subject. He had not been perfectly open with the police. He had said nothing as to who the missing children were; he had described them as young foreigners of whom he had the charge. Though now neatly and plainly dressed as young English people of their own class, their appearance was yet so remarkable as to make them easily identified.

The police inspector considered that there would be no difficulty in finding them, and engaged that all the district offices in a widening circle should be questioned without delay.

Mr. Armitage, however, had better reasons for alarm on their account.

'My good sir,' said he to Rosewarne, 'this is extremely unfortunate, extremely so; most untoward. Without having the power of producing these young people, our case has not a leg to stand upon.'

'You need not tell me that,' said Rosewarne, gloomily.

'What is your theory? What do you suppose has become of them?'

'If they have not fallen into some cursed trouble with the police, do you suppose that the Grenfells have got hold of them?'

Mr. Armitage mused for a time. He crossed and uncrossed his legs, looked hard at Sam, and then said,

'Hum! I think not. Sir Theophilus is playing too straightforward a game for that. He prides himself too greatly upon being a thoroughly honourable gentleman. No, he would not countenance such a proceeding. Barlow is a cut above that, too.

No, if they have not fallen into trouble with the police from some folly of their own, in my opinion Baldino has got them once more in his clutches.'

'That is the only other surmise probable?'

'Yes, that is the most likely thing of all, I believe. Had they much money between them?'

'Not unless they had been robbing the till again; their aunt did not say as how they had. They had a little, though. I never kept them too short, lest they should have an excuse for helping themselves.'

'Had they enough to take them far out of town?'

'Oh, no! A matter of a shilling or so between them. That would be all.'

'And it would not be a small quantity of liquor which would overcome either of them, would it?'

'Not it.'

'Then Baldino must be looked up at once. Where does the fellow hang out?'

'Somewhere in Saffron Hill, where most of his tribe herd together. This is the place where I heard of him last,' said Sam, handing a paper to Mr. Armitage.

'Hum!' said that worthy. 'Not a very respectable locality, but we have ways and means. You had best keep out of it, Rosewarne. You see the police inspector, and make what inquiries you can for the sweet darlings in a quiet way, but leave this to me. The Italian has his eye upon you, you may be sure. If you appear, he will only spirit the young ones into some new hiding-place. He will not take them out of the country, he will try to get his price for them out of you in one form or another. Sooner or later, if he has them, he will be making overtures to us, you may depend upon it. I will have him well watched in the meantime.'

'Confound him!' cried Rosewarne, bitterly.

'Confound him with all the pleasure in life when we have succeeded in our object,' said Mr. Armitage, with a quiet smile. 'Not before, if you please. What is Baldino asking for them, Rosewarne? What is the exact sum in question between you?'

'Five hundred pounds,' replied Sam, gloomily. 'Five hundred down now, and five more when they come into the property. It might as well be five thousand, or five million. For that modest sum, he will cancel what he calls his bond, and trouble us no more.'

'And cannot you raise it?'

'No, I cannot. It is absurd. He must wait, like the rest of us, until the matter is settled. The young ones are costing him nothing, it is I who am forking out for all their expenses.'

'He ought to perceive that you are indissolubly bound together. Nothing at all can be got without you, who alone hold the clue to the secret by means of which their birth may be proved; neither can you do anything without possession of the youngsters. I have told him so more than once, but nothing seems to make any impression upon him.'

'He is a pig, an ass, a mule, a dolt,' fumed Rosewarne. 'Make any impression upon him?—that is past praying for. And if I gave him the money, how am I to know that he won't play me false, after all? I am sick of the whole business. I am more than half-inclined to chuck it all up.'

'Now, Rosewarne, listen to me. It is too late to go back, you must see that for yourself. The baronet would have an action for conspiracy and false swearing out against you immediately. You have

set this afoot; you have got me mixed up in it; *you must succeed.* Understand? *Must.* You are pledged to me, and I am not going to risk being struck off the rolls for any fool's-headed folly or shilly-shallying on your part now. If you stick to your guns like a sensible fellow, success is certain. Faint-heartedness now means complete ruin for all of us.'

'I suppose you are right,' said Rosewarne, biting his nails.

'Right! Of course we are right. The enemy is at check already; delay is their only weapon left. A few months more, and out you come triumphant. There will be a long minority, five or six years at least, and nobody but you to be guardian to the young bear. You can recoup your expenses fifty-fold during that time, and have your revenge upon that haughty old sinner, too.'

'Yes,' said Rosewarne, sulkily. 'But—'

'There are no buts,' cried Mr. Armitage, hotly. 'As I told you before, there is *no* retreat for you now. Do you think that I have taken this up, and carried it on to such a point as that where it now stands —committed myself to it, dirtied my fingers with it, imperilled a good business for it—to let you show white feather now? No, my good sir, there must be no flinching now. Believe me—*no flinching.*'

'Don't bully me, Armitage. I won't stand it.'

'I don't want to bully you, or anyone,' said the lawyer, with a sudden change of manner, but a watchful look in his eye. 'Nobody wants to bully you; but you should have thought of all this before you came to me at first.'

'We won't quarrel, Armitage,' said Sam. 'I am put out and bothered with all this worry. I'm in the devil of a mess if those young plagues cannot be found. I must

have some time for quiet thought. I will see you again to-morrow. Good-night.'

He rose, and buttoned his overcoat. Armitage feared that he had strained the leash too tightly, and tried a more conciliatory tone.

'Good-night, old fellow. I had no intention of riling you. All will go well, you will see. Only, don't turn chicken-hearted now, or all the fat will be in the fire. A little more pluck, and success is yours; then comes enjoyment. Good-night.'

Rosewarne walked out of the office, into the fog and the slush. He walked out, and was never seen again.

Mr. Armitage kept much that had passed in this interview to himself. For a few days he had not been surprised by Sam's non-appearance; he thought that he was sulky on account of his plain speaking, and the pressure he had put upon him to continue the law-suit.

Like Mr. Barlow, he kept an eye upon Baldino, who was seen more than once in a low public-house near Saffron Hill, much frequented by himself and such as he. He was always alone, no evidence of his being in possession of the missing children offered itself.

This, however, did not astonish Armitage, nor alter his opinion that the Italian had them in hiding somewhere. He considered that, if Rosewarne was not simply offended, he had met with some knowledge as to where this was, and had gone, perhaps, out of town to find them.

But at the end of a few days Baldino also vanished. Then did Armitage blame himself for the fatal mistake he had made in not keeping a still closer watch upon the man. He had allowed himself to be put off his guard by the open appearance of the fellow in his old haunts, and had not caused him to be dogged persistently.

He felt the mistake as soon as two days had elapsed, during which Baldino had not been seen. He had been too sure; too certain of his own cleverness, and Italian guile had been too wily for him.

Then did Rosewarne's disappearance assume more ugly a look to him. The whole matter was darker.

What had he been about? How had he made such a slip? How could he have allowed himself to be so hood-winked? Where was Rosewarne? Was it at all likely that he had discovered the faintest clue without informing him?

They had not parted in enmity. They certainly had been very near a quarrel, but it had blown over, and they had separated amicably. Rosewarne was not in the habit of sulking. He had been overtired, greatly harassed, very irritable on the occasion of his visit to the office, but that was quite comprehensible, and

excusable. His temper was quick, but soon over. Mr. Armitage felt that his continued absence and silence needed some explanation. He had replied to Mrs. Rosewarne's first enquiry according to his own belief; but, in a few more days, wondered how it had come about that such an enquiry had not, of itself, aroused his uneasiness. When he sent up to Apple-Tree Court, and found him to be still absent, his fright was proportionate to his former apathy. He set to work all the engines at his command, and none of them elicited the smallest shadow of evidence as to the whereabouts of any of the four. Like Mr. Barlow, Armitage, also, heard of Thomasine's dream. Like him, his common-sense repudiated it; and, also like him, it haunted him.

His efforts to trace the missing party redoubled; but of Rosewarne and the children no trace could be found. Of Baldino,

he had more hopes, though those hopes proved elusive; and the necessity of concealing his dilemma from Sir Theophilus and Mr. Barlow hampered his efforts to elucidate the mystery. Used to very shady clients; familiar with their haunts and their ways; and furnished with agents practised in unscrupulous and secret enquiries, he burrowed about among the lowest grades of humanity, now hoping that he had discovered traces, now doomed to fresh disappointment.

All the most likely localities, such as Saffron Hill, and the districts at the back of Holborn, were thoroughly searched, and searched in vain.

Baldino was known there; it was also known that he had possessed the Italian children, and that he was mightily wroth with their English friends for, as he said, cheating him out of them.

He had been heard swearing vengeance

upon their uncle for detaining from him large sums of money which he declared to be due to him; and there was a time when he, and his wrongs, and his threats were tolerably familiar subjects; but he had been less seen or heard lately.

His money was said to have been exhausted long ago; and he was driven to some occupation which might bring him more. He was said to have engaged a piano-organ, and gone on a beat in the suburbs of London; but where, exactly, his former acquaintances either did not know, or would not betray.

Mr. Armitage perceived that time was likely to be consumed in the search; and it became his interest, even more than that of his opponents, to delay the great Grenfell trial; which, both parties being now unwilling to press on, dragged its weary preliminary action on and on, without coming at all nearer to a date for settlement.

Baldino appeared no more in his old haunts; no boy or girl answering to the description of Tommaso or Carlotta was heard of.

There was a colony of hand-organ players with their families at Kingston. For years these people had herded together in the low quarters of that town, near the river; but had recently migrated to a higher situation upon the hill above.

During the removal, while all their attention was much absorbed with their own affairs, a stranger had appeared among them for a short time, and been joined by an Italian girl. He only sojourned among them for a few days; then went on a tour into the country villages further away up the Thames valley.

A man, answering to his description, was traced to Chertsey, Sunbury, Walton, Weybridge. He was tracked from place

to place, found at last, and proved to be an entirely different person; neither was the girl at all like Carlotta, being some years older, and half as big again as she.

This man spoke of another, whom he knew had 'apprentices,' and who had recently moved to an address off the Commercial Road, that he might ply his trade about Blackwall and Plaistow, and down among the seafaring population near the docks. This clue directed the search into that locality; the man and his apprentices were found: the latter proved to consist of two little girls of six and eight, who danced to the hurdy-gurdy, while a monkey played antics upon it.

Failure again; complete failure.

The tendency displayed by such people to hark back invariably, sooner or later, to their once familiar quarters, caused Mr. Armitage to keep a close eye upon Saffron Hill, even while hunting up these people;

but Baldino never appeared there again.

It became almost a certain conviction with him that the man had succeeded in getting the young ones into his power. What else should cause him to conceal himself in this rigid fashion? He would make a move soon, doubtless; there was nothing for it but waiting.

But where was Rosewarne? This was a separate, and equally impenetrable mystery.

A man, known to some of his comrades as Lop-eared Jake, because he had a curious hitch in his walk, which suggested the gait of a rabbit—that is, if there were any reason at all for the nickname;—this man was occasionally used by Mr. Armitage as a spy upon shady characters very shy of allowing their addresses to appear. This man shambled into the office one day, biting a bit of straw.

'You want two foreign kiddies, don't you, master?' asked he.

'Not *any* two,' replied Armitage, 'only one particular couple. No others need apply.'

'Ah!' said the man. 'Boy and girl, or girl and boy?'

'Boy and girl,' said the lawyer. 'Have you got them outside? Let me look at them, and I'll tell you if they are the right ones.'

'Naw, I ha'nt got them, outside nor inside, but I think I knows where they may be.'

'Well, what then?'

'What'll you stand for a peep at 'em, master?'

'Nothing at all unless they are my birds,' said Mr. Armitage, firmly. 'Not a stiver for a false lead. If they prove to be the pair I want, and you can get me possession of them, twenty pounds. If you can, further, help me to find also Mr. Sam Rosewarne, of Apple-Tree Court, St.

James's, I will make the twenty fifty.'

'Fifty down, gold, honest?'

'Fifty golden sovereigns.'

'Stand a trifle now, just for a sample, master. They be your kids, sure enough. I don't know nuffin' about the old 'un; but wheer smoke is, fire is. He'll not be far off, I dessay, when the young 'uns is got at.'

Armitage took out a couple of half-crowns.

'Fair play, Jake?'

'Fair play, sir. I never show you nought else, master. You know as I dursn't, sir.'

Armitage pushed the silver across the table, and Jake spat upon the coins by way of 'han'selling them,' as he said.

It was a Saturday afternoon; a time when, contrary to the custom of higher class men in his profession, the lawyer did much paying business; but he left his

office willingly to the care of his clerk on this occasion, and accompanied Jake at once to see if he had really run down his game. He had his own reasons for trusting this emissary of his. Jake spoke the truth in saying that he dared not mislead him.

'You had best take the train, master,' said Jake. 'Tis at Lambeth.'

'Lambeth?'

'Ay, master. Lambeth Walk. If your hurdy-gurdy chap ever owned a mother, she hangs out theer. She or her twin sister keeps a fried-fish shop theer, with a kind of hot-hell up over. Hot enough she makes it at times, by all accounts, too. She's got your kids.'

'How do you know, Jake?'

'Seen 'em, master. Seen 'em with my own eyes. 'Twas a queer bit o' luck, too. Seen the hurdy-gurdy chap one night, making over in that direction, and looking

back, cunning like, over his shoulder, as he turned corners, to see if anyone was a-follerin' of him. But two can play that game, master. I knaws my trade, I do; he never seen me.'

'Sure?'

'Sartin sure. The Walk were lively that night, as lively as ever 'tis. Business were brisk; and theer, a-helpin' the old lady to sell pennorths o' fish, as she were a-fryin' away like blazes, were your birds. The old 'un had had a drop, and the kiddies was a-cheatin' her of the pennies gaily. "Ecco le denari di più in più, madre mia!" they bawled out every whips' while; and then they poured a handful of coppers into her greasy lap, and pocketed two theirselves. Up came the hurdy-gurdy chap, his eyes a-blazin' like two fires, and knocked the blessed old 'ooman off her three-legged stool like winkin'. "Didn't I tell thee as I wouldn't 'ave

them childer out 'ere?" says he, or summut as might ha' been that, and he begins layin' about him like a good 'un, to right and to left, and druv them all indoors, and banged the door to, and there was the devil and all to pay inside, in two minutes. You never 'eard sich squalling, but there was no understandin' a wurd as they squalled out. Them was your kids, though, master, you bet.'

'Sounds like it,' said Armitage, thoughtfully.

He fell into a brown study until the train stopped at the right station; when, the night having fallen, he took his way, beside his guide, to that sweet and peaceful locality, Lambeth Walk.

The usual scenes here met their eyes. Booths for the sale of every loathsome and disgusting food, of every description of rag and rubbish, of everything which a sane Christian would suppose to be utterly

unsaleable, abounded on every side; all lit up by flaring naphtha-lamps, and emitting stenches indescribable. Rusty keys and scraps of old iron on one side, showy, flaunting woman's clothes on another, piles of shell-fish on a third, fronted by little saucers, in which those loud-smelling edibles were picked out from their native homes, and swimming in vinegar. Here were old boots and shoes; there, gaudy cheap prints, all scarlet and yellow. In one place, chunks of meat were being sold off by auction.

'Come, bubb, bubb, bubb, buy-uy-y!' re-echoed from every side. 'Going, going, going, gone! Sold again, and got the money!'

On the next stall, a huge, bloated fellow, horribly drunk, was seated on the top of a vast heap of potatoes. One of his eyes was all bunged up. He was in a maudlin state, and whined out incessantly,

'Blues is three parts bad; kidneys is watery!' Did he consider this a recommendation to his wares? Beside him a blowzy woman, also drunk, roared at the top of her voice,

'Apples! apples! Make a bid, make a bid; I'll take any money to-night but matrimoney. Make a bid! What's yer offer?'

Crowds of filthy, squalid creatures thronged the pavements, shouting, screaming, yelling. Hulking, tipsy fellows reeled along them; sly-faced children slunk craftily through the throngs. It was Pandemonium broken loose.

Through it all the two men wended their way, too well seasoned in such scenes for heeding any.

At the far end of the Walk, a small tumbledown looking tenement was shut and boarded up. 'To Let' was chalked in large letters all across its frontage.

Jake stopped in blank amazement. He stared as if he could not believe his own eyes. He stared, and stared again, and whistled a long note of dismay.

'I'm jiggered!' he exclaimed. 'The game is flown.'

'It was never there!' cried Armitage, in high wrath. 'You've tried to fool me, Jake! It is well that I came at once, and found you out for myself. I'll be even with you for this, my fine fellow.'

'I ha'n't. 'Selp me God, I ha'n't, master. They was 'ere, gospel truth, they was, last night as ever was, at nine by the clock. I swear they was, all four on 'em!'

'You lie!' said Armitage.

'I don't, I don't, master. Ask the landlord.'

After some difficulty, the landlord of the empty house was hunted up. He was drinking in the parlour of a low public-house, and already pretty far on, too far

for his own interests. He was nothing if not abusive.

He wanted none of your swells, not he. He knew nothing of your Eetarlians, them as lived in 'is 'ouses was naught to him, so as they paid their way. They came and they went, what was it to 'im? If gentry coves wanted to take one of 'is 'ouses, let them come of a Monday morning, not when a gen'elman was a taking of his ease in his club. Darn ye all! I want none of ye.'

No subsequent questioning or search resulted in any information. The clue, if clue it really had been, was again broken off short, and led to nothing.

CHAPTER XII.

THE RIVER GIVES UP ITS DEAD.

Sir Theophilus came up to town with Mr. Barlow. No one, himself least of any, supposed that he was likely to be of the least use in the investigations which so interested them all; but he could not bear to be far from the scene of operations.

He wanted to know what went on almost from hour to hour; he felt that he must be on the spot to hear at once of any possible new discovery; so to town he came, and with him came up Lady Sarah. She could not be more lonely, more un-

happy than she was in the country; but the removal to town was of no service to her; only a vague hope of some event occurring beset them both, and they felt too far away at Tregarthen.

They thought of this possibility and of that; they prepared themselves for every imaginable change in their horizon; but the only thing which did happen was that for which they did not prepare themselves, and that was,—nothing.

March was over; April came and went; with May, London became thronged, busy, gay. The swarms of pleasure-seekers filled all their usual haunts. Clubs, theatres, operas, shops, parks, streets, exhibitions were packed with smart people; and the thousands who ministered to their needs followed in their train.

Lady Sarah entered into no festivities, she refused every advance, and her acquaintances let her alone.

'Poor dear Sarah!' they whispered among themselves. 'We are so sorry for her! She has become so queer! How sad it is!'

And then they daffed and danced, or watched others daffing and dancing, and thought no more of their poor dear Sarah. They did not know what they could do for her; she had put herself beyond the pale of their experience.

Sir Theophilus haunted Mr. Barlow's office, seeking fresh news, day after day, and never finding any.

Charles was working very hard at Oxford; his tutor saw possibilities of distinction before him, and the young man was bent upon taking as good a degree as he might win, as a step towards regaining something of the position which he believed to be gone from him for ever. His parents' comfort; all chance of marriage; his whole future was wrapped up in this first

step; and it should be no failure, could he help it. He was not unhappy. When there is something to be done, people are seldom miserable. It is hopeless, helpless waiting which saps the spring of happiness.

Charles had made up his mind that Tregarthen was lost to him for ever, but he would, as far as in him lay, accomplish for himself and those dear to him what fate had in other ways denied.

So, for the present, his father and mother scarcely saw him; only upon one or two flying visits of very short duration.

Lady Dereham came to call on her aunt, and tell her how Sir Thomas and Lady Courtney had gone off to Rome upon hearing of Augusta's condition.

'We are all so glad that they have forgiven dear Gussie, aunt. These separations in families are really so very distressing in every way. Mamma was so lonely, too. It would have been very bad

for the younger girls to come out so soon, and when they have such a nice governess, too. Their education could not possibly have been properly completed till next year; and, of course, with all their masters and studies they could not have been much with mamma, you see. And Dereham is always wanting me; and, with the season at its height, it is not possible for me to do much for her; and so mamma was hipped and dull. Dear Augusta! I am so glad papa and mamma went to her. And Mr. Selby was really very nice, was he not? And so handsome!'

Lady Dereham babbled on, while her aunt raged in her heart. Diana lonely? She, with all her prosperity, her wealth, her children? She driven to accept the inevitable, because she could not bear having no daughter to be her constant companion for two years?

And this forgiveness of the erring

young couple would increase her own difficulties with Charles. It would bring the Selby family more into notice, help to break down barriers, bolster up her headstrong boy in his romantic folly.

Lady Sarah was always lying down when Louisa called, after that, and unable to see her niece.

Mr. Selby had been elected as Royal Academician; that was another card played into the hands of Charles and Mabel. How cruel were the decrees of fate, in Lady Sarah's eyes! The daughter of a successful artist, a Royal Academician, already connected with the family, was no very unsuitable marriage for Charles *now*; but Mabel was as poor as ever, and how desirable, oh! how very desirable it was for her boy to marry money! And he might do so, if he only would!

Lady Sarah's health was declining beneath all this depression and worry of

mind. It deteriorated fast beneath this constant brooding, this never-ending discontent and restlessness. Appetite forsook her, sleep forsook her; she was equal to very little exertion, yet was there no disease. She drove in the park alone, she sat at home alone, she went to bed early, hoping to shorten the days, and lay wide awake in her gorgeous chamber through the weary hours of night, wondering when an end would be put to this long suspense, and perfect misery commence.

One day she went to see the Academy. It had always been a favourite haunt of hers. The courtyard of Burlington House was packed with carriages, set as thickly together as herrings in a barrel. Within, the rooms were nearly as much crammed; all the world and its wife seemed to have assembled.

Crowds were gathered around the pic-

ture by the new R.A. Lady Sarah awaited her turn to squeeze in, and was met by Mabel's eyes, sad, tearful, pathetic, looking straight out of the canvas at her. Those eyes were haunting ones. Lady Sarah shivered a little, and turned away.

A capital group of Italian peasant women gossiping round a fountain struck her. The figures were very life-like. One woman, painted with her back turned to the spectator, the knuckles of one hand resting on her hip, the hand turned backwards while she gesticulated with the other, was so life-like, the colour was so good, the sunlight effect catching the copper water-pot so real, that she thought,

'If I were buying pictures this year, I would have that.'

It was 'sold,' however; but she was sufficiently pleased with it to look for the artist's name. It was 'Horatio Selby.'

Lady Sarah was fond of water-colours, and, after this second reminder of her *bête noir*, passed on into the water-colour room. She found some landscapes which pleased her, and tried to forget the Selbys in misty mountains and dashing seas. Among them hung, below the line, but in an excellent place, a delicious branch of Marshal Neil roses, all dewy and fresh, in a dull blue Barum ware pot.

Again she admired, again she observed the ticket in the corner, again she looked for the artist's name.

'Dorothea Mary Selby.'

Lady Sarah closed her catalogue, returned to the principal room; and, feeling very weary, sat down to rest.

The shifting crowd, the fearful and wonderful toilettes, the by-play constantly presented to her eye and ear, faintly amused her. It was better than the solitude of home; she would rest there for a while.

But she was not to escape the Selbys that day.

Presently, her attention was attracted by a lady, holding the hand of a slender growing boy, whose other arm supported his crippled frame with a crutch. Hovering a little behind him, guarding him from the press of the crowd, was a young lady of peculiarly graceful figure, whose face was turned away from her at first.

The boy made some remark which this girl stooped to hear more plainly; then looking up, with amusement smiling out of her eyes, she repeated it to the elder lady, evidently her mother, who laughed pleasantly.

A gentleman came up to the little party, and introduced an elderly man to the ladies. Lady Sarah recognised him as a very great person; one whom she regarded with veneration. The child's remark was repeated to him, and he laughed in his

turn; stooped, spoke kindly to the crippled boy; then began to talk to the young lady, making himself agreeable, evidently admiring her, and desirous to please.

Lady Sarah knew people who would have lost their heads, had they met with half so much gratifying notice from such a man; but how simply and charmingly did this girl accept it! She appeared to be quite in her element; there was no consciousness, no excitement, no forwardness; she responded to the attention paid to her with innocent straightforwardness, and was evidently making herself pleasant on her side. Presently this gentleman left the room, and his place was taken by a group of younger men, among whom her ladyship recognised one or two well-known artists and literary celebrities.

Some joke was being bandied about between them; and the girl took her part in it with merry grace and spirit, yet in a

manner totally devoid of all vulgarity, all suspicion of flirting. She was evidently liked and respected by this somewhat Bohemian-looking set. In the midst, she noticed that her mother was looking tired; she nodded gaily in adieu to the young man who was laughing with her, went round to the other side, and offered the support of her arm, with a sweet protecting care that made poor Lady Sarah feel more lonely than ever.

Who was there to give a gentle hand to *her* fatigue? Who was there to notice when *her* strength flagged?

A little contention arose among the gentlemen as to who should have the privilege of offering the lady a firmer arm. She accepted one, and the group moved away out of sight.

Lady Sarah knew them all. They were Mrs. Selby, her husband, little Steenie, and Mabel. There was nothing in *that* girl's

manner to regret; nothing to wish different; nothing to render her unfit to be her daughter. How she envied Mrs. Selby! Ah! had she but a soft young arm upon which to lean through the decline of life, looming so sadly before her! None of them had seen her; no one was in the room to assist her. She drew herself up in her most stately manner, wrapped her laces around her still commanding figure, and descended alone to her carriage in solitary dignity.

Then she went up to her silent boudoir, locked the door, and cried for an hour. She was aroused by a knock to request admittance; and, hastily attempting to remove all signs of her emotion from her face, she opened, to find Sir Theophilus there.

'Sarah, my dear, are you well?' asked he, distressed at her appearance.

'Not very,' replied she. 'I went to the

Academy, and found the rooms very hot and close. I came home with a bad headache, and was lying down.'

'You had better ring for Hawken, my dear, and let her bring you some drops, or tea, or something.'

'I do not need anything, thank you, Sir Theophilus.'

'But, my dear, I have something to tell you, and really you look so unwell that I must beg you to take something. Let me ring for tea?'

Lady Sarah consented, because she was too much overcome to resist; and, while the tea was being prepared, he went himself and fetched her lavender, and sal-volatile.

'What have you to tell me?' asked she, languidly submitting to his attentions.

'Drink this first, my love,' said he, insisting upon the sal-volatile.

She obeyed, and lay back in her large

arm-chair by the open window. She did not expect that he had anything of importance to tell her. She thought that he was only what she was wont to call 'fussing' about her.

'My dear Sarah, I have just come from Barlow's office, where the strangest, saddest piece of news has just been communicated by the police.'

Lady Sarah was quite roused up now.

'News!' she exclaimed. 'What! of the law-suit?'

'Affecting the law-suit—yes.'

'Tell me quickly, Sir Theophilus. I can bear anything—what, oh! what is it?'

'The man Rosewarne, who was the prime mover in it all——'

'Yes, yes. Is he found? Has he repented? Has he confessed his wickedness?'

'He will never repent. He can never confess. Yes, he is found—dead.'

'Dead?'

'Dead. His body was taken out of the river this afternoon, quite unrecognizable.'

'How do they know it is he, then?'

'They believe that it is from the contents of his pockets, his watch, and other matters. They were looking for Selby to break it to the wife and daughter.'

'In the river! How did he get there?'

'At present there is no evidence to say. He has been there for weeks, the police say, and his body is in no condition to reveal anything. He has his watch and money in his pockets. It is therefore clear that he was not robbed. The watch had stopped at half-past ten; and, as it was about ten o'clock when he left his lawyer's office, it is supposed that he must, somehow, have fallen into the river on his way home. All that is quite in mystery, however, at present.'

'Sir Theophilus! His daughter's dream!

'Yes, a curious coincidence, is it not? But it explains nothing.'

'Nor does it throw any light upon what has become of the boy?'

'No, except inasmuch as the absence of him and of the Italian, Baldino, looks grave, seen in this light. If Rosewarne has met with foul play, the disappearance of the Italian looks very bad.'

'Is there any symptom of foul play?'

'That must be decided after examination by the surgeons; but the poor fellow has been so long in the river, and his body is so beaten and battered by being washed up and down among vessels and the piers of bridges, that the police think little can be made out.'

'Oh, how dreadful! How dreadful!' cried Lady Sarah. 'It is like a judgment upon him; a judgment, a clear case of judgment.'

'Do not say so, my dear. It is not for

us to judge. Neither does it quash the law-suit; it only increases the difficulties of the case. The claim to the estate is filed; and, with this man's death, all clue to the unravelling of the mystery has gone, unless he has left papers in the hands of Armitage, or elsewhere. All papers which were upon his person were reduced to pulp. At this stage, it is impossible to say how his death will affect us.'

Sir Theophilus had no more particulars to communicate; and, though he and Lady Sarah discussed the subject long, they could make no more out of it.

CHAPTER XIII.

WHAT HAD BEFALLEN ROSEWARNE.

And how had Rosewarne come to be found in the river? We must retrace our steps a little, and take up the thread of this story on the night when he left Armitage's office, an angry, brooding, perplexed man.

He went out into the murky night, heeding not the discomfort of the foggy atmosphere, so engrossing was the distress of his own mind. He was a man of few affections, but of an intense, concentrated type. He had loved his pretty sister; he

had loved his mother; he loved his only child, and he loved Frank Selby. Partly because she was Mr. Selby's daughter, partly for her kindness to poor Thomasine, he liked Mabel.

And how had Fate used him in respect to all the deep yearning love of his heart? His mother was dead, and died as she lived, blaming him heavily for his conduct in furthering his sister's ill-omened marriage with the young heir. She had gauged her daughter's character more accurately than he had.

Her vanity allowed to slumber, to be kept in control by religious influences, steady repression, constant watchfulness, and a mother's good advice, she might have been content to have married a worthy man in her own rank of life, settled down among her own steady, respectable friends, and been a good and happy woman. But fired with the notion

of being as rich and great as 'her ladyship;' flattered by Mr. Grenfell's admiration of her beauty; ignorant, vain, foolish, she had eloped with him without any real deep-seated attachment for him to carry her through the troubles which their conduct entailed upon them, or any principles to enable her to resist temptation. The consequences were most disastrous to herself as well as to all connected with the unhappy story.

Left to her society alone, Mr. Grenfell had quickly wearied of her. Love will carry a man over much disillusion, but passion dies beneath the first shock. Yet he meant to have done his duty to her, and baby influences might have improved her had not the count fallen in her way. *He* was no clean-minded, honourable young fool as was her husband. *He* had no intention of marrying a girl such as she; *he* never would have married her had he met

with her in the days of her comparative innocence; he did not even provide for her, and at his death she was left without means, without friends, without character, in a foreign land, alone, pretty, and wholly unprotected.

Even Sam, sent home with the story of his young master's supposed death, was not at hand to save her; the shock of her husband's death at her lover's hand, of her lover's sudden demise shortly afterwards, brought on an illness, during which all her trinkets and clothes were sold to supply her with necessaries; and upon her recovery, the peasant girl possessing no innate reticence, refinement, delicacy to serve as the slightest safeguard to her, as secondary restraint in the absence of religious training, her descent into the abyss of vice was rapid.

The news of all the events subsequent to his leaving his master were long in

reaching Sam. It was only when no letters arrived, no intelligence whatever was heard, that he took alarm, and set off to see for himself what had happened.

Then Thomasine fled before his search for her, and evaded all meeting with him until want, degradation, and disease compelled her to apply to him for assistance. Her death had been very piteous, and she left behind her a boy whom Sam dared not produce in his mother's lifetime. He provided for him, paid for his keep, and brought him up, to prove a terrible scourge to him in the evil tendencies of his character.

Whether that boy were Charles Grenfell's son, whether his children were legitimate offspring, Sam only knew. He declared that they were so; why then had he delayed so long the information of their existence? He said that he had lost sight of his sister; but this had never

been the case. Why then did he not produce certificates of their birth and baptism? He said that his sister's state, when he met with her again, was that of a woman so near death that he never thought of asking her for them, but that they could be produced at a proper time.

Mr. Barlow declared that he had not got them to produce. Did they exist, or did they not? Did Armitage know, or were the whole of the facts concealed even from him?

That he suspected, at any rate, that all was not straightforward was indubitable from the pressure he had put upon his client that evening; a pressure which Sam deeply resented.

Chafing at the thought that he had put himself in the lawyer's power; brooding over past sorrows, mortifications, wrongs; harassed by all the complications surrounding him at the present time, he went

heavily along the City streets, pondering upon his position.

He had embarked in this plot scarcely thinking whither it would lead him, or what it would cost him. To give a scare to the man to whom he bore a grudge; to cause him to pay heavily for his immunity; to display, to feel his own power, to gratify his own spite had been his dream; but he had attained none of these hopes. The thing had grown, hydra-like, into colossal proportions; he could not free himself from it; he was driven on by his own tools; he was compelled to proceed at his own risk, to his own ruin.

Bitterly did he now regret ever having begun it. His sister could not profit by it; even her son was dead, and wanted none of the pelf; the children he had left were wholly unfitted for the position into which he desired to thrust them.

In the attempt, he had estranged him-

self from wife and daughter; offended his beloved Mr. Selby; injured Miss Mabel; imperilled the provision made for his crippled daughter's future life.

He could not raise five hundred pounds without appropriating nearly half of the little portion laid aside for Thomasine. It had been amassed by hard saving extended over many years. He was no longer a young man; should he lose it, there was little chance of his living to replace it; all he owned besides was afloat in his business, and ought by right to belong to his wife, whose money had helped in establishing his trade.

He was not justified in risking the future comfort of these two women dependent upon him; but he had already gone so far, done so much, wasted so large a sum,—it was hard to lose the whole for the sake of this one further expenditure. What must he do?

Musing upon these questions; turning them over and over in his mind, so as to view them on every side; he proceeded along Basinghall Street and Cheapside, on his way home, paying little heed to the traffic around him.

It is strange to notice the contrast between the City streets by day, and the same places by night. The uproar, the ceaseless din of trampling crowds, rolling wheels, rattling harness, creaking, lumbering carts, at one hour; and the silence, the solitude at another. But Rosewarne was used to this, and heeded not the cessation of noise, the absence of jostling multitudes on the pavements.

St. Paul's rose before him, vast, solemn, impressive; almost as if it would block his way to revenge, by its warning shadow in his path.

The house of God. The house for prayer and praise. The house wherein

lay so many of the mighty dead;—their pomp, their power; their struggles, their schemes for good and for ill; their successes, their failures; all over;—awaiting the Judgment Day that will see every hidden thing, and bring it into clear light, radiating from a purer, holier throne than any known on earth,—surely better influence should emanate from that great and noble pile to influence his dark, brooding soul.

But he heard not its silent speech; he went on his way, still debating in his secret heart:—should he persist in his wrong-doing? should he take the check and relinquish it?

He had not noticed the quiet of the City streets, but, as he looked down Ludgate Hill, the confusion of traffic forced itself upon his attention. He knew that the theatres in the Strand would be disgorging their thousands to add to the turmoil by

the time he reached that thoroughfare. Looking down the hill, dense with fog, which the myriads of gleaming lights ever shifting their places failed to illuminate, he shrank from plunging into the murky depth before him.

'I will go along the Embankment,' said he to himself. 'There I can think this out, without all this distraction around me.'

Queen Victoria Street was not quiet, certainly, but he had soon passed through that, and leaving De Keyser's huge pile of an hotel on his right, with the blaze of light and roar of traffic on Blackfriars Bridge to his left, he entered the embrace of the fog which caused the Embankment to be nearly deserted.

From that point, so great is the sweep which the river makes, he would, under ordinary circumstances, have gazed across at the galaxy of lamps about Westminster.

Now, they were scarcely perceptible, so thickly did mysterious waves of fog swoop down and shroud everything from sight. The river slid by, black, oily, and noiseless, not a wavelet broke its surface; its waters looked like polished glass, mirror-like in their darkness.

So solitary was the place, that a thrill of fear came over Rosewarne upon hearing the soft pad of feet coming swiftly up from behind him, as half-a-dozen runners, in light-blue drawers and white jerseys, surrounded and passed him in their exercise, on this side and on that.

'Pooh,' muttered he, 'what a fool I must be to let myself be startled by a thing like that.'

He pursued his road doggedly, though a strange sense of loneliness and awe beset him. He half wished that he had not come that way, scorning himself at the same time for the thought.

It was not far, he had already proceeded half way. Cleopatra's needle arose, ghostly in the mist, by his side; and the lights upon Hungerford Bridge were in front of him, a row of pale yellow spots with no radiance from them, scarcely casting reflections upon the dark flood beneath them. Just beyond, built over the space once occupied by Hungerford Market, lay the Charing-Cross Metropolitan station, by which he would turn off from the Embankment, up Villiers Street. Ten minutes more would bring him again among crowds and the glare of gas, nothing could occur in that short time to alarm him.

Nothing? Out from the curtain of fog before him loomed a form, a shape, a man. Beneath a lamp he met him, recognised the face—it was the sardonic, crafty face of Baldino, lit up with an ugly smile of triumph.

Rage took possession of Rosewarne at

this sudden encounter; Baldino was stricken by surprise, and recoiled for the first moment, then stood his ground.

'Have you got the scudi ready, signor?' mocked he. 'Do you want your witnesses? Do you desire to embrace your children, so handsome, so dear? Pay then for the privilege, pay sordido.'

'You scoundrel!' cried Rosewarne. 'Thief, kidnapper, scellerato! I will pay you nothing, nothing, not one denaro. I will send the police to you, I will put you into prison, I will drive you from the country, but be cheated by you, never!'

'As the dear signor pleases. But, without the scudi, he does not find the beloved of his heart; the witnesses who are to win for him money, lands, ah! how wide, how grand! Has the signor the scudi ready?'

Rosewarne foamed with passion; he hurled every foul word of abuse which he could summon upon the man, who stood

before him smiling demoniacally, with the sense of power in his possession, mocking the Englishman's impotent rage.

'Becca morte!' cried Sam, at last beside himself.

The Italian's face changed. 'Grazie, signor,' he hissed, and slipped aside into the murky darkness. 'No man calls me *that* twice.'

Rosewarne drew a long breath. Already his passion was spent, and he began to doubt his wisdom in having given way to it. Cold as the night was, he was covered with perspiration, and took out his handkerchief to wipe his heated brow.

In that instant, like a panther, Baldino leaped upon him, seized him in his supple arms. Rosewarne, taken completely at unawares, was helpless in his grasp. He made a struggle, but the Italian was in the prime of life, he drawing towards its close; the effort only threw him nearer to

the parapet; he saw his danger, strove to avert it, battled, fought, failed, was lifted in that brawny clasp, and hurled over into the depths below.

Like a fiend as he was, Baldino stood looking down, watching to see the white face rise. It came up, livid with hate and fear, glaring up at him, then sank again, and was borne past upon the receding tide. The Italian shivered a little, drew his garments closer around him, and proceeded on his way. He had not meant this, he had let his temper get the better of him. What should he do now? He had slain the bird that was to lay the golden eggs for him. Ah! what cursed folly! What must be his next step? He must put himself safe from pursuit—from the consequences of his crime should it be discovered. No time was to be lost. He slunk away into the fog, and disappeared too.

Far too wily to abscond at once, to

allow his disappearance to tally with that of Rosewarne, and so be linked with that circumstance, arousing suspicion, he permitted himself to be seen in his usual haunts, but warily, and with intervals of days between each appearance, while he quietly made ready for his departure from England.

The children were really quartered upon his mother in Lambeth Walk; but he took vast precautions not to be known in that neighbourhood himself, or to mingle his identity with that of the old woman. These precautions prevented his keeping as strict a watch over their safety as he should have done.

Drunkenness is not a common vice among his people, but his mother had learnt to practise it of late. The children, hating the seclusion in which he ordered them to be kept, encouraged their guardian in her fatal habit; and, when she was incapacitated, broke loose to enjoy their

liberty. They had just escaped detection more than once, and were caught on the occasion when Jake saw them.

Baldino knew Jake well enough. From a crevice in the blinds of the house, he had seen him leaning against a lamp-post watching the fracas; and his immediate flight was the result. That very night he removed mother, children, and all to the docks, and made his escape in a small trading vessel within the week. To Lyons first, thence to Genoa, afterwards here and there did he wander, until he believed that he had obliterated all track of his footsteps; and in a year or two he returned to Venice.

He was sought for, but through a short time; not, as he fondly believed, because he could not be traced, but because no link connected him with the death of Rosewarne, and the great Tregarthen inheritance case ended in a wholly unforeseen manner soon afterwards.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE TABLET IN THE MONASTERY CHAPEL.

Who so happy on the morning after her parents' arrival as Augusta? Brilliant, as her father and mother had never seen her, from returning health, congenial surroundings, wifehood and motherhood, she showed at her very best. In her simple household, formalities and affectations were, perforce, swept away, and the real heart at the bottom of her follies and helplessness came into play. Love had taught her much, and would teach her much yet.

Whether she could have thriven under the abnegation of comfort and beauty, the

constant demand upon her for self-denial and exertion which small means entail in London, may be doubted; but the simplicity of her life in her lovely mountain villa was doing her good. The fine air, the early hours, the pure milk, the plain cooking were all exactly what her frail constitution needed; the luxury of her early life had made her indifferent as to what she ate or drank, and she and Horace were in perfect agreement on that point. They had, therefore, fallen at once into living the life of the people about them. Her incapability threw her completely into the hands of her servants. She could not direct them into the habits of her home, and they went their own way, with the happiest results for the health and purse of the young couple.

Warm with love for the parents from whom she had never been so long separated before, and for whom she had never

cared so much till she had felt their loss; eager to make them comfortable; delighted to play the hostess, to show her husband's paintings, and her own last and greatest treasure, she was like a new Augusta to them, and a very charming one.

Horace had, at first, been more abashed in their presence. Short time as had elapsed since he had been the head of a house, a husband, and shorter yet a father, still he had already begun to look on life from these standpoints rather than from those of a headstrong young lover. He knew that something was due from him to Sir Thomas, who had come so generously and forgivingly to them as soon as he heard of their need.

'Sir,' he stammered, 'this is very good of you, very good. I feel it so, sir. I am conscious of great misbehaviour, and that I do not deserve such kindness.'

'Well, well,' said Sir Thomas, pleased

with the young man's frank acknowledgment of having done wrong. 'Well, well, my dear sir, it is done now, and cannot be undone. Sorry for it is all a gentleman can say.'

But a flush and a mischievous twinkle crept into the young fellow's downcast face.

'I did not say *that*, Sir Thomas. I regret to offend you now, but I am *not* sorry.'

There was a comical look of deprecation yet impudence of a sort struggling for mastery in Horace's face, a sly glance upwards from the confusion imprinted on it, as of a boy uncertain how far he might venture to go, which was irresistible.

'You young rascal!' cried Sir Thomas, 'how dare you tell me so?' But he could not restrain a laugh at the same time, adding, 'You seem to have taken fine care of that naughty girl of mine, and

brought her into a pretty mess. I hope that you will show yourself to be a true man, and be more steady and prudent in the time to come.'

Horace was touched.

'I will try, sir. I will really try to take care of her. I do love her very dearly, and I will endeavour to deserve my good fortune in having secured her for my wife. And, sir, one thing I will promise gladly: I will never do such a thing again.'

Sir Thomas could not but laugh a second time. It was of no use to scold the lad, there was too much of his father about him to make it possible.

Augusta reappeared, clinging to her mother, yet still holding her baby in her arm. The group of the three generations touched Sir Thomas deeply. He stepped forward, kissed Augusta kindly, and looked at the child.

'Take her, papa, bless her, and bless me

too, dear papa. I am so sorry that I gave you and mamma so much pain. I see it now as I never thought to do before. Bless us all, dear papa.'

She put out her hand, and drew her husband forward, to lean on his breast, with a loving look.

Sir Thomas had felt no difficulty in forgiving the young couple when he saw them thus, and they had parted happily overnight.

What a fair morning it was, when Sir Thomas came forth from his chamber next day. It was early, and there was a freshness in the air peculiarly exhilarating.

The distant stretches of the Campagna were still shrouded in soft mists, but the sun blazed down upon the old garden and the gay flowers. The air swept through the house, laden with the odour of jessamine, and myrtle, and sweet-briar roses. A girl came in with a great basket of purple

and white grapes upon her head; the fruit hung down in luscious clusters. She made her morning salutation to the signor with frank 'gentilezza,' and bade him 'buon' giorno.' Through the open door-way a goat-herd was seen approaching with his long train of silky white animals, led by a majestically horned patriarch of the goat tribe, and women came to milk them on the threshold, and brought in the sweet new milk, foaming, in earthen vessels.

At the fountain, others, in their picturesque linen head-dresses, were drawing water in brass or copper vases of classical shape, and showing all their white teeth in laughter and jest, as they discussed the *festa* of the previous evening. Somebody was singing gay canzone over his work at a little distance, and the nightingales were still trilling in the shade of the ilex grove. Larks were filling the sunny sky with melodious rapture, and

even the drip of the fountain harmonized with the music in the air.

The aroma of coffee reached him from the kitchen, as Zia pushed open the door, and appeared with a pile of light brioches, newly baked. Mariuccia came in sight with the créatura, and Lady Courtney was not far behind. She took the infant, and held it up for its grandfather's morning salutation.

'Only think, Thomas,' said she, 'poor dear Augusta called the pretty darling Diana, after me!'

This was the climax of all.

The young couple came in, full of pleasant chat.

'I am so glad to get coffee and brioches again,' said Augusta. 'Only fancy, mamma, they brought me a present of a "bacile" as soon as baby was born, and I had nothing but semolina and maccaroni till it was all eaten up.'

'What is a "bacile"?' asked Sir Thomas.

'Oh! mine was a ship in full sail, a most artistic production. It was a bason as big as a bath, with a paste ship stuck all over in patterns with vermicelli, and maccaroni masts, and little cakes, and goodness knows what. There was a chicken swimming in the semolina sea, and looking like a swan, with a maccaroni neck most gracefully arched, and maccaroni wings. It reminded me of the swans you used to make for us on Christmas Days at dessert, papa, when we were little. Do you remember, you used to make them out of apples, and never would make them on any other day? I used to think them a part of Christmas.'

'I remember,' said Sir Thomas, smiling.

'You will make them again some Christmas for little Diana, will you not? No apples ever tasted half so good as those.'

'You have a good memory, Augusta.'

'I understand now, sir, where she imbibed her taste for high art,' laughed Horace. 'What are you going to do to amuse your father and mother to-day?' asked he presently.

Augusta looked perplexed.

'There's baby,' said she, doubtfully.

Horace roared; even Sir Thomas smiled.

'Suppose we take a drive round some of this lovely scenery?' said he. 'Have you had any exercise yet, my dear?'

'No, papa; nurse thought I might take cold in church yesterday, and would not let me go to the christening.'

'A drive is very different. We will not go too far.'

'Well, I must go to my classes,' said Horace, rising. 'We will meet again at dinner-time. If you will drive in to Rome after being out with the ladies, sir, I could take you to some of the studios, and show you some very good work.'

'I will come in later, then,' said Sir Thomas.

How pleasant that early drive was, over roads whose hedges were heavy with blossoming ivy and laurel, massed with the wild sweet-pea, brocaded with flowers of a thousand hues. The mists had fled from the Campagna before the sun, and the long line of the blue Mediterranean lay against the horizon. Hoary ruins of the past, broken columns, desecrated tombs, demolished acqueducts were thickly strewn among nature's gorgeousness at their feet, and the silent snow-capped mountain summits caught roseate lights above their heads. On every side was picturesqueness.

Pifferari played outside a rustic hut, and children danced to the tune. Girls went by with huge bundles of straw on their heads, or baskets of fruit which would have broken the heart of a Lance to see. A

ragged boy sat astride upon a mule with panniers, an old crone told her beads at the wayside shrine of the Madonna.

It was so long since Augusta had been out, and she was so happy that day from the reconciliation with her parents, that everything seemed more beautiful than ever. She exclaimed, and described, and pointed out this to her father, that to her mother,—they had never known her so animated.

They came near a little monastery up among the hills, nestled into a sheltered nook. The bell was ringing for prayer, and some monks were hurrying in from their vineyard.

'That must be the place where the poor English gentleman and his little baby-girl are buried,' said Augusta. 'I should like to know who he was.' And she related Zia's story.

'Poor fellow! What a sad ending to a romance,' said Lady Courtney. 'Who did you say he was, my dear?'

'I do not know, Zia forgot the name, but she said there was a marble tablet with it inscribed upon it in the chapel. Do stop, papa, I should so like to know whether we ever knew any of his people.'

Sir Thomas stopped the horses.

'Not you, my dear. You sit still in the carriage with your mother. These chapels are apt to be very chilly sometimes. I will go in.'

Sir Thomas, afterwards, often said that it was destiny—fate—which led him to enter that chapel. It promised but small interest, he felt but little curiosity upon the subject of this nameless man, though his history was sad. But, to oblige his daughter, he entered the doors carelessly, looked around, and removed his hat.

A priest came forward to act as *cicerone* and display the treasures of the place. He asked the signor's grace; it was a poor endowment, they had no costly possessions, no fine pictures or carvings; such as they were, behold them. The foundation was ancient, many generations had worshipped there; the shrine to Monsignore Giacomo was thought creditable. Yes, an English milor was buried there; it was many years ago, and the story was sad. He had taken to wife a daughter of the people in his own country, and so made enemies of all his friends for her sake, and she had betrayed him,—gone away with the man he thought his friend, leaving her little infant behind her. The child died of neglect,—cold—a fit—what you will,—it was too tender a youngling to be left without a mother's care. The milor had pursued the fugitives, fought the traitor, and fallen at the first shot,

pierced through the heart. The traitor was a nobleman of the vicinity, well-known, and rich. He had repented, it was a folly of hot youth, and the catastrophe sobered him. He had given orders for the burial of father and child, and defrayed all expenses. Soon after, he was drowned in the Bay of Naples, in a boat accident. and his line had come to an end in him. It was all before his time, but he had often heard il padre Anselmo relate the history, it was one to be considered. There was the tablet, that one in the wall.

Sir Thomas glanced at it, started, looked again ; wiped his eye-glasses, and advanced nearer to read it more carefully. He could not believe that he saw it rightly, that he translated it correctly, that it was not a dream, a mistake, an illusion. But no ; there, in plain letters, did it stand, no one could doubt it :

To the Memory of
CARLO GRENFELL,
of England,
Who died September 14th, 1831, aged 22.

Also of
THOMASINE, his infant Daughter,
Who died September 12th, 1831, aged two months.

Could it be genuine? Could this be the real resting-place of his wife's eldest brother, the man about whom so great a mystery existed, who had been supposed to have lain quietly in the vault at Withiel so many years, and whose burial-place had been unknown though sought so earnestly of late? Did so slight a veil conceal the real truth?

And his child, on whose behalf a claim upon the baronetcy had been set up—a claim bringing such terrible ruin upon his brother-in-law and nephew, such disgrace upon an honourable old family. Was that child a daughter, after all, and lying, an innocent baby, asleep beside her

dead father so many years, and none of them knowing the truth? Was the whole terrible plot but the fabric of a child's card-house, to shiver into atoms at a touch?

And how had dissimulation been repaid! What consequences had resulted from that poor man's first wrong step! Thought crowded upon thought in Sir Thomas's mind, and overpowered him completely. He turned very white, and sat down.

The monk was dismayed. Should he summon aid? should he fetch the signorine from without? would his excellency have restoratives, wine, brandy, pure water?

Sir Thomas accepted a glass of water, and recovered himself, checking the worthy frate in his movement to fetch the ladies. He must break it gently to his wife, to Augusta. They were already surprised

by the length of time he had spent in the chapel, and glad to see him emerge.

'Papa! you look strange. Was the name that of anyone we know?'

'Thomas! What is the matter with you?' cried the two ladies in one breath.

Sir Thomas passed his hand across his face.

'My dears, the strangest thing! We must have been brought here by Providence Himself. Diana, my love, prepare for something very startling. The man who lies buried there,—the man whose sad story Augusta has learnt,—was your own eldest brother, Charles.'

'What!' exclaimed Lady Courtney. 'My brother, about whom Rosewarne has been trumping up this dreadful story?'

'That same brother. And our dear Augusta has been the means of putting everything right, and confounding that wretched man; for Charles had a *daughter*,

not a *son*, and she, as Augusta said, died two days before her father, and lies buried there with him.'

'My God!' cried Lady Courtney. 'Poor Theophilus! How thankful I am! And Charlie! Oh! Augusta, my dear, dear child, this is all owing to you.'

'Oh! I am so glad, mamma! And now Charlie can marry dear Mabel, and we shall all be so happy together!'

'Humph!' said Sir Thomas.

'Don't say that, papa. She is so nice, so charming, dear Horace's own sister. They have been so good, so patient, so noble. You must be their friend, and persuade Uncle and Aunt Grenfell. They will listen to you, if you talk to them, as they would listen to nobody else.'

'There is a great deal to be done first, my dear. That is not a matter to be decided in haste. I will consider it. But,

my dear Diana, you would like to visit your brother's tomb, would you not? Let me hand you out. Not you, Augusta, you must sit still. We shall not stay long.'

He gave Lady Courtney his arm, and they re-entered the chapel, leaving Augusta to work herself up into a state of ecstacy at the idea of a happy ending to her cousin's attachment to her sister-in-law. It was not till her mother came out in tears, and she noticed her father's extreme gravity, that the whole affair struck her in any other light. Her uncle had never been aught but a name to her, hardly more even to her mother; and soon the wonder at the discovery, and indignation at the tissue of falsehood woven by Rosewarne, resumed the pre-eminence in their minds, and long did they sit discussing the story in all its bearings,

again and again, that evening, relating it to Horace, and asking each other questions which none of them could answer.

CHAPTER XV.

CONCLUSION.

A sheaf of telegrams was sent off from Rome next morning, and caused the wildest excitement among our friends in London.

Sir Theophilus positively ran out of the room with his in his hand, and burst into his wife's apartment without any ceremony.

'Sarah! My dearest Sarah!' cried he, in a voice tremulous with joy, and a face brighter than it had been for many a long day. 'My dearest wife! Can you bear

good news? Sudden good news? The best of news?'

'Ah! Sir Theophilus! What good news can ever come to us more?'

'Half an hour ago I would have said the same, my dear; but all is changed; everything will go well now, for the truth has come out. How lucky for us that poor dear Augusta ran away with that young man! It is all owing to them.'

'Sir Theophilus! Are you gone mad? What can be owing to them? What do you mean?'

'Joy, my love, joy! All is found out! All is right, and we may drive a coach and four through that scoundrel's claim. Courtney wires—

'"*Joy. All discovered. Charles Grenfell died* 1831—*left no child. Letter follows.*"'

Lady Sarah's shriek of surprise was wild.

A hansom drove up at that moment, containing Mr. Barlow, excited out of every sign of his usual precision. He, too, held a telegram in his hand.

'See, Sir Theophilus. *Tombstone found.*' Then followed a copy of the inscription.

Hardly had the trembling baronet and his wife deciphered this, before a messenger arrived with a wire from Charles.

'*Coming up by express. Hurrah!*'

Fast as express train and fleetest cab could bring him arrived the young man. He dashed into his father's presence with a third telegram in his hand. This was from Horace.

'*Hurrah! Congratulations. All found out, and right. Your uncle's tombstone here. Fireworks! Fizz! Take the lid off!*'

On this occasion, Lady Sarah forgot to be disgusted with slang. She never even

remarked it. Nobody remarked anything; everyone talked at once, everyone cried, everyone laughed, everyone congratulated everyone else. Even the pompous butler begged leave to express his joy, and that of the domestics, and Sir Theophilus wrung his hand, unable to reply in words.

The housekeeper and lady's-maid both fainted away; and afterwards each blamed the other for not attending to 'my lady.' But my lady did not need them, for joy seldom kills anyone, and she forgot herself in the excitement around her. So the housekeeper gave vent to her feelings by giving directions for a particularly sumptuous dinner to be prepared in honour of the occasion, which nobody could swallow when it was served. The lady's-maid put out her lady's choicest attire, which Lady Sarah had not time to don; and the butler opened his best wine, and was forced to allow it to be drunk at the second table,

because none of the gentlemen touched it.

For Charles, sly dog! seizing his opportunity, produced, as soon as the first effervescence had subsided, yet another telegram, which he had received from Frank Selby.

'*United congratulations upon news just received, from "one and all" here.*'

'Mother,' he said, 'crown for me the happiness of this happy day. Let me bring your daughter to you now. Let us make our family complete. Will you not, dear mother? Father! Speak for me. Let Mabel come to you now.'

Lady Sarah could not resist him. Her heart was softened, and she sobbed out,

'Do as you will, Charlie. You have been a good son to us through all our sorrow.'

Sir Theophilus grasped his son's hand.

'If you have not the right to be happy,

who should, my dear boy? Fetch your Mabel.'

And Charles struck while the iron was hot, and brought his sweet Mabel to complete his joy, by seeing her received by father and mother both.

What more remains to be told? Lady Sarah was lonely no longer; for, though Charles and Mabel were not married until his college course was concluded with great credit, yet did the elder lady never lack a daughter's care from that day. She also had the little crippled Steenie much with her, and his health greatly improved by spending nearly all his winters at Tregarthen.

Horace and Augusta could not attend the wedding when it took place, because the youngest Miss Selby was at that same time succeeded by the youngest Mr. Selby. Charles and Mabel therefore went to visit

them upon their wedding-tour, and found them happier than ever.

Charles did not enter the lists for a Civil Service appointment. He went into Parliament, and became an active and respected member; paying particular attention to all such matters as alleviated the condition of the poor. Every good work found liberal support at his hands, and kindly sympathy at those of his wife; while his mother's happiness was greatly increased by the practical assistance which Mabel's gentle influence persuaded her to give to her cottage hospital, her sea-side convalescent home, and her establishment for friendless orphans.

In all these undertakings Mr. and Mrs. Grant helped, and little Beatrice promises to grow up into just such a blessing to the poor as her step-mother.

Steenie, too, thoughtful beyond his years, declares that, if the Duchess will

help him, he will become a clergyman like Uncle Grant, contented with a country life, and allowing his candle to burn clearly in a small parish.

Dorothea spends much time with her aunts at Withiel, and is the greatest of comforts to Miss Letitia. Household notability is not her forte. In this department at home, Felicia and Evangeline have succeeded Mabel, and Miss Selby requires no help, being still perfectly hale and active.

Dorothea lives in a paradise of flowers and fruit; has a charming little studio of her own, built for her by Charles, on the estate, just beyond her aunt's garden; and her pictures are always to be seen in the water-colour galleries, whence they wander far and wide.

She is devoted to her art, and loves her quiet life. Augusta's elopement was a

great shock to her own estimate of her cleverness and common sense; it taught her humility. Relieved from the constant chafing of a large family in a small house, struggling with very limited means, her temper has improved, and Miss Letitia's gentle influence is great over her.

That dear aunt loves to walk to the studio, and watch the growth of the drawing in hand; to read aloud to her niece as she works at it, or sit knitting, and chatting about poetry and art.

When the light fails, Dorothea offers her arm, wraps the delicate form up warmly, and the two return across the pleasant garden to the cheerful parlour, where Miss Selby is ready to receive them; and Mabel walks over for a cup of tea, and Charles comes to look for her; and bright merry voices mingle with cheery laughter.

Lady Sarah, meantime, is delighting herself by watching the evening ablutions of a very small Theophilus Grenfell. To watch the development of this young man, and his growing resemblance to the family, is her greatest joy; and as she sits down to dinner with her husband and children afterwards, it is wonderful how much she finds to say about him.

Horace and Augusta remain at Frascati. The place suits her health, which is now excellent, and it also suits their means; for though Sir Thomas makes them a comfortable allowance, and Horace is steadily improving in his profession, they have become prudent now that they already have three children, and are saving for their education.

Tommaso and Carlotta were found. Baldino vanished; but they were living, in great poverty, in Venice; and glad

enough to be helped into a more comfortable and reputable life than that which they were leading.

Baldino's old mother was dead; and the glimpse of better ways which their few months in London had afforded them was more appreciated by them in their utter destitution, and years of greater discretion.

Sir Theophilus gave them an allowance, on condition of their returning to their original names and living decent lives. He educated them well according to their own station; and they turned out fairly respectable, after all.

And Frank, blythe Frank, is growing fat. He is as handsome, as light-hearted as ever, but he paints no more potboilers; chiefly, he says, because the children *will* grow too lanky to serve any longer as models for the style of thing which the

sentimental lady-public most appreciates.

There is, however, a class of the wealthy public which still admires his steady advance in true art; and shows this admiration in so practical and gratifying a manner as to make him a very prosperous man.

THE END.

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